Opinion
Spirituality



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December 21, 2017

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From purple to rose to white. We liturgically travel from a story of grief, loss, strife to new, joyful, and hopeful. We move from the end times to a new time that is filled with invitation and possibility. Think about it. As we approach the darkest day of the year, we are reminded of God's promise of light. This co-mingling produces a new color, a new story, and new hope: rose-colored vestments, if you will.

Our tradition and liturgy remind us of this commingling when we take the cup of wine and add a drop of water to it as we prepare for the Lord's Supper. The presider prays, "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity."

This imperfect science can never really return its original separateness. Extracting the water from the wine is not an option. The very combination of wine and water have created a new symbol, a new creation.

I pray, act, and live with this rose-colored anticipation for my church. The whisper of my vocation gets amplified every Gaudete Sunday as God invites me to be loved, to experience freedom in that love and to bring freedom to others. The reading from Isaiah becomes the Justice lover's "battle" cry:

> The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
> because the LORD has anointed me;
> he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,
> to heal the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives
> and release to the prisoners,
> to announce a year of favor from the LORD
> and a day of vindication by our God.

In a time of identity politics that divide not unite, regular, repeated systematic abuse of power, and growing greed, consumption, and irresponsibility, I write in the hopes that purple and even a little bit of white becomes rose which in turn, seems to return to purple only to move much more fully to white. Let me explain.

As Florence and the Machine sing, "It's always darkest before the dawn," I join a number of observers in the experience of this truth. The struggle in our lives is so

real and constant that a glimmer of hope brings enough disruption to expose the systematic struggle that leads to resolution. For all those liberal progressives out there, some might say this theory can be applied to our current political system: our nation has lived through much greatness, tragedy, and divide. Our 44th president disrupts the repetition of power and leadership only through the perspective of a white male. And now our return to what seems like the traditional white male perspective is only giving way to an absolute newness in the coming celebration of a true Christmas. In Gaudete words: Purple for 43 presidential terms plus the white of light through a grassroots campaign to elect our first black president, then a "violet" return to the tradition of purple can only mean one thing — hope, a sustaining hope is coming.

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And so I bring to prayer all those people whose transitional, inherent or circumstantial identities co-mingle with the cup of the church just enough to change our church forever and urge us all towards a new narrative, not a return to an old, outdated, hurtful narrative.

> *The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,*
> *because the LORD has anointed me;*

Who do you see as the "me?" Do you see yourself as the "me?"

This "me" is anointed priest, prophet, and king and is inherently respectable and dignified.

Does this "me" include social identities that are not mainstream? From the transitional identity of being a young adult or a senior citizen or being unemployed or being rich to inherent identities that racialize our cultural heritage or identities that rest firmly in sexual orientation?

What if we all received God's anointing and proclaimed God's spirit upon us?

> *he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,*
> *to heal the brokenhearted,*

What are the glad tidings? What is healing?

Who are the poor and brokenhearted?

> Have you ever experienced a moment of clarity when God's justice broke-through, coloring your life with love, life, wholeness, unity, and peace?
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What is truly liberating and freeing to hear from others? From God? What experience of healing would you need to feel whole and holy again? Can we be our own agents of restorative justice and care or is this our call to offer true care and compassion to others?

> *to proclaim liberty to the captives*
> *and release to the prisoners,*

How is liberty understood? Who are captives?

What is proper release? Who are the prisoners? What is the course of their imprisonment?

What restricts us from being a free child of God? How must we both proclaim and release? What words or sentiments do we need to make public? What actions must we take to give others an experience of freedom?

> *to announce a year of favor from the LORD*
> *and a day of vindication by our God.*

Have you ever experienced a moment of clarity when God's justice broke-through, coloring your life with love, life, wholeness, unity, and peace? Can you imagine this experience for those one the periphery of our society? Can you vow to recognize your own anointing, duty, and ability to respond in this love?

Let us claim our own co-mingling in the Body of Christ and become God's herald as we await the greatest herald of them all, our sibling, Jesus.

[Jocelyn A. Sideco is a retreat leader, spiritual director and innovative minister who specializes in mission-centered ministry. She directs the Community Service and Social Justice office at St. Ignatius College Preparatory in San Francisco. Visit her online ecumenical ministry, In Good Company, at ingoodcompany.net.co or email her at jocelyn@ingoodcompany.net.co.]

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