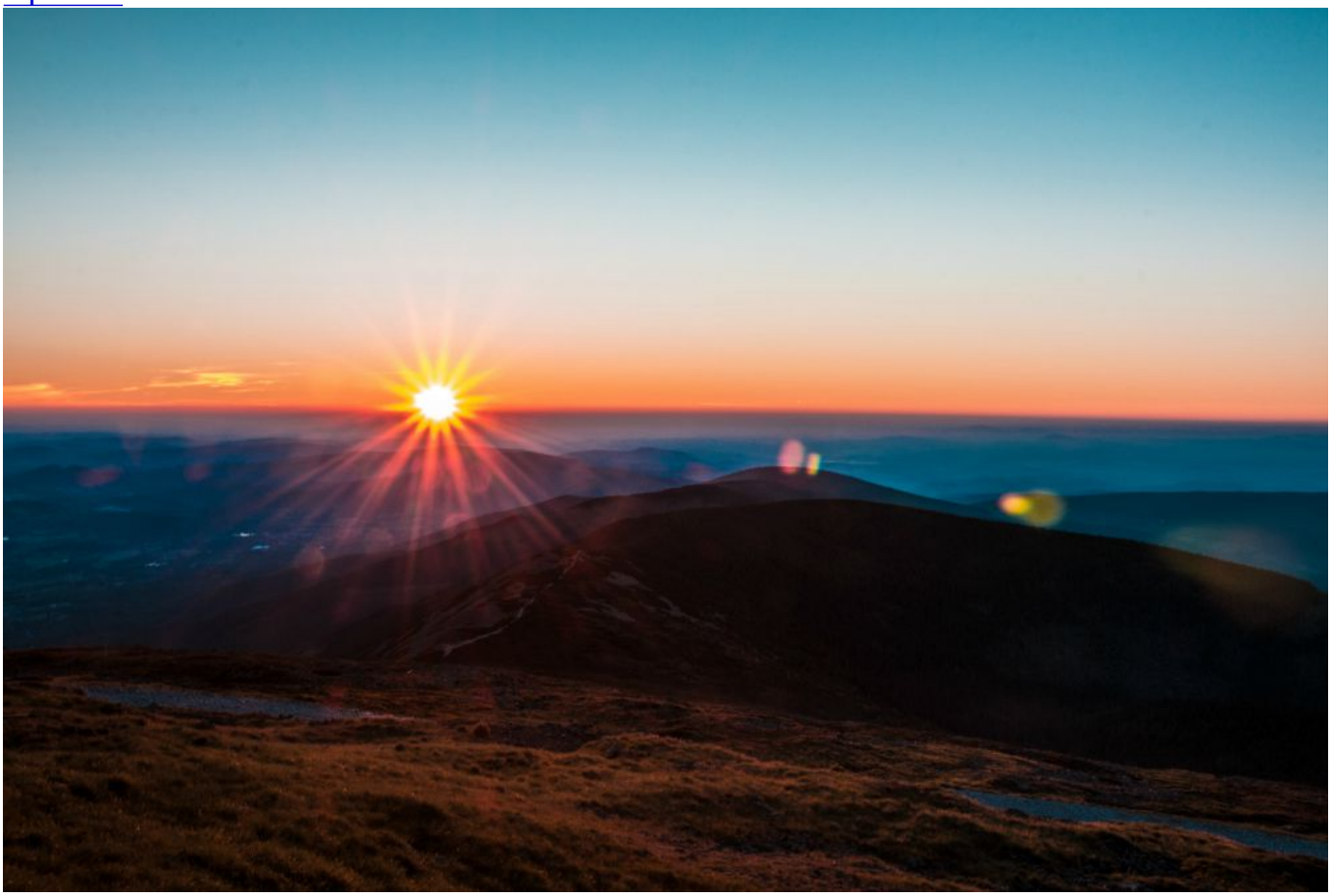
Opinion



(Unsplash/Jakub Kriz)



by Jocelyn A. Sideco

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Our faculty enjoyed a visit by Social Justice Sr. Simone Campbell a few months ago. Many may recognize her as a "Nun on the Bus" when she and others toured the nation to promote God's kin-dom of love and justice. Sr. Simone has served the poor effectively as a lawyer and keen public policy advocate, particularly through her work with Network, a lobby for Catholic social justice.

Sister Simone spoke about the difference of a heart breaking versus a heart breaking open.

I left that moment with her thinking and praying about the moments I found myself with a broken heart. Could I recognize this as an invitation for God's love, compassion and care to enter? Or would I stay stubborn in my own self-pity and close myself off to others?

Brokenness is dangerous because we can remain in that pain for the sake of resisting hope. Hope in these moments is too suspect and unforgiving. This hope is misunderstood and thought of to be superficial. In fact, we may actually confess that hope requires us to let go of this pain and our own assumptions of what we either deserve or have earned. We realize we want to hold on to this pain, to hold on to this memory, but actually, it's limiting us, killing us even.

We stay broken, licking our wounds because this posture is what we are used to or comfortable with or desiring. I want certainty. This wound is certain. This pain is real. No one, let alone, Jesus, can give me enough reassurance in his proposed alternative. How can I trust what I don't know? Following Jesus' example of moving through this real pain and overcoming it in order to get to what is most human about our experience is beyond belief.

This Sunday's readings speak to how Jesus approaches us when we are resistant or even closed.

> "This is how it is with the kingdom of God;
> it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land
> and would sleep and rise night and day
> and through it all the seed would sprout and grow,
> he knows not how.
> Of its own accord the land yields fruit,

first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.
And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once,
for the harvest has come."

Jesus meets us at our own experience. These parables are meant to move us from resistance to consideration. Of course, we do not know everything! But Jesus reminds us of the things we do know even if the process is not fully understood or known.

We are invited to trust the process, do what we can, and allow God to do the rest. This is a tall order if we are honest.

Doing what we can may require a re-construction of what we already have come to know: that we are loved and that we were made to be in relationship with one another.

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Jesus' parables remind us of the things we can already trust because we know them. Perhaps our past experiences have given us a sense of being broken open already. I don't just mean the literal sense of a seed broken open and being sowed in good soil. What if our own bodies, our own memories, our own choices have already introduced us to the familiar place of being broken open for a purpose?

I think of my own vulnerability as a woman in the church. I could remain broken-hearted about the hierarchy's resistance to including me, or my very own social location could actually serve as fuel for the transformation I want to contribute to seeing in our church. But why am I so scared?

I like holding on to my outcasted identity sometimes. Being different has defined me. So, if that were to change anytime soon or if being a woman called to priesthood becomes no big deal, who would I become?

I suppose that could be the wrong question when I remember I am loved and I am made to be in relationship with others around me. Maybe my identity is in the community not in the self? Maybe my anger, confusion and pain transform into action towards integration, curiosity about the process and the resistance, and vulnerability, softness and tenderness to the call in my community with Christ Jesus.

Being broken open to the possibility that human experiences are meant to be held together, bound together is where God calls us to be kin-dom to one another. This is where the grace is for me.

My heart breaks in concern for those suffering around me. *And* I cannot stay there. Jesus invites me to consider what may be beyond this reality. So I turn towards this suffering and pray that my anger, confusion and pain be broken open to action, curiosity and tenderness to the others all around me.

[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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