Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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May 21, 2020
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“You will grieve, but your grief will become joy” (John 16:20).

Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23

When men talk to other men about trials involving suffering and great courage, they turn to sports metaphors or war. When Jesus wanted to prepare his Apostles for the heart-wrenching experience of his departure and death, he told them they would have to be as strong as a woman in childbirth. It must have terrified them.

What did any of these men, including Jesus, know about giving birth, but perhaps this was his intent, to stretch their sense of reality beyond anything they had ever experienced. He was preparing them for a mysterious passage no human being had ever made before, a near death experience that would open them to an utterly new way of life. They will leave their former selves behind, but then be clothed in glory and filled with indescribable joy.

It is a scene missing one thing that might have changed the course of church history. Had a woman been present, she would have taken on designated authority as the only one prepared to make the leap of faith Jesus was describing. In fact, the women disciples were the first to endure the grief of his crucifixion, standing helplessly by the cross during his death throes, seeing his body sag on the nails as he expelled his last breath. They were the first to know the joy of his new life on

Easter morning, the first to announce the Gospel to the incredulous men barricaded behind locked doors.

Had the Apostles not found their courage by watching the women give birth to Mother Church they would never have known how to take charge. Again, it was Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was at the center of the anxious disciples huddled in the upper room before Pentecost. She was their retreat master, telling them not be afraid of the overshadowing Holy Spirit, who would impregnate them with the Word. She was the midwife who showed them how to breathe deeply and accept the birth pangs that precede every new life.

Something wonderful is about to happen, but it will take us into unfamiliar territory and stretch our imaginations. It will change us so completely that we can never go back to the old ways of hiding and rationing our hope on small expectations and careful plans about what we are to do with the rest our brief lives and small gifts.

Jesus' resurrection is about us. He wants to take us to new level of existence, a larger vision of who we are, why we are here and what our lives are for. Not about being virtuous or keeping the rules, or saving our love for the right moment, but about overflowing with joy and confidence that God will give us anything we need to live abundantly and without fear. Pentecost is coming, the harvest of hope and the festival of being alive in God, available to anyone who, like a woman in childbirth, knows that her hour has come.

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