Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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Acts 18:9-18; *Jn 16:20-23*

"When a woman has given birth, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world" (John 16:21).

Conception must occur before birth can happen. The powerful metaphor Jesus uses to describe the experience his disciples need to endure to become the church is deeply instructive for us as we await Pentecost.

The full story of our conversion includes the time of questioning and longing that brings us into relationship with God. Our consent is necessary to make this encounter in faith a love story. Within that love story we open ourselves to receive the gift of divine life that begins in us like a loving conception. The Word of God may come to us in crisis, like a cry in the night, or gradually as a whisper. What God initiates is ours to nourish by prayer, and it grows in stages as we respond. Like gestation, the Christ in us takes form in the womb of our consciousness, becoming our identity and the organizing principle of all our values and sense of purpose.

No mature faith occurs without struggle. What love begins comes to birth in labor, our need to choose and commit ourselves to one path over others, find and obey our authentic selves before God by relinquishing every false promise or compromise. Vocation supersedes career as discipleship takes precedence in our lives and our goals.

What we experience personally and individually is a parable of the collective responses that make us the church. The Holy Spirit sings the same new song in every believer, uniting them to be the body of Christ in the world. This does not happen without our free, conscious participation, including a life of prayer and the sacraments. What child grows without nourishment? So, a serious Christian needs the Eucharist in all its implications, especially for the full use of our gifts within community.

What human person reaches maturity without discipline and socialization to learn virtue and responsibility? So, every mature Christian grows up by sharing with others the burdens of justice and service, a life for others and habits of awareness and compassion, integrity and steadfastness, openness and truthfulness.

How tragic it would be to spend our lives without becoming ourselves, the persons God called us to be from the beginning. What joy there would be if whole communities became the presence of Christ in a parish, a neighborhood, a society and a nation. Isn't this why we were born, both as human beings and as the children of God?