

[Spirituality](#)
[Soul Seeing](#)



(Unsplash/Jonny Gios)



by Carolyn Ancell

[View Author Profile](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

October 3, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

I woke from the dream unsettled; puzzled; every detail clear, then and for many days following. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In June, my husband and I had arrived at our little summer place in a rural RV park in the Arizona White Mountains. As I'd been anticipating several months of pleasurable activity and carefree rest away from the scorching heat of the low desert where we live, I was surprised to instead find myself entering a place of inner weariness and darkness that I could only describe as depression. I recognized it; I'd been here before.

The park offered daily opportunities for outdoor activities, line dancing, and arts and crafts. I tried to get involved, but both interest and energy lagged. Every day I practiced my beloved double-strung harp, working on challenging pieces I would do for a concert I had promised to provide for the park. But practicing gave me no joy. The people who had asked me were good people, family, friends and community. I did not want to disappoint them. I would do it, but my heart was not in it. I plodded through the day and flopped into bed each night, welcoming a few hours break from the sadness.

One night, a month in, came the vivid dream. In the dream I had bought a house from some trusted friends; but when I went to take possession of it, I found the walls lined with cabinets, every cabinet full of boxes, every box stuffed with unfamiliar documents, strange tools and toys, evidence of a life that was not mine. I determined in the dream that I would open and discard one box every day until all of them were gone, no matter how long it took. Then I woke up.

Three mornings later, I rose before dawn, made a steaming mug of coffee, and sat quietly in the pre-dawn darkness. Not wanting to turn on a light to read the day's gospel for meditation, I decided to invite Jesus to accompany me into my dream. I asked if I might look at the dream through his eyes.

Advertisement

The words of Psalm 139 soon came to mind: "I knew you before you were born. I fashioned you in your mother's womb. I know you." Jesus then gently asked me if I was fully living inside that person he had created — or if I had moved to the side and allowed others to live inside my "house," filling it with boxes of what I saw as their

expectations for my life, my hours, my strength. His question stung.

I've always been a people pleaser, valuing others' happiness with me above my happiness with myself, way too often saying "yes" to requests when for my own emotional survival, I should have said "no." I am a firstborn child, always the responsible one. Work gave me value and approval when I was young. I am having a hard time letting go of that still, and I am 82!

Jesus waited patiently as I pondered his question. My first reaction was to look at a history of all the people, projects and pressures I could blame for my feeling squeezed out and sidelined in my own soul. Surely those people, projects and pressures had to be responsible for my weariness, my joylessness.

Jesus watched me kindly, waiting still. When the moment of recognition came, I cried with relief. "Ah, Lord. It is not them! It is me. I have sidelined myself, and in doing so have sidelined you and what you have created. There is still time. Help me!"

He smiled.

We began to open boxes. The first one we opened was my commitment to play the harp at church the following Sunday. I had been working industriously on things I thought would please the congregation. Now I chose music that expressed and fed my soul, music that I could offer to God with deep concentration and intimacy. The task was joy-filled. On Sunday, my humble offering was transformed — and transformed me — into eucharistia, thanksgiving.

The contents of the second box we opened were more mundane; but when dealt with, no less transformative. I had been asked to consider planning and organizing a community event, but had not yet given my answer. Someone had to do it. I could, but was already stressed with other commitments. I looked over at Jesus. He nodded. I picked up the phone, and for the first time in a long time, said, "No."

That evening, Jesus and I sat in companionable silence on my little front porch, watching dusk softly gather over the summer park. Finally, he spoke to my heart. "You know, Carolyn, that I made you as you are and I love you. Do not be dismayed that you still struggle at age 82. Rejoice! I gave you a tender heart with which to love and care for others. You are learning, and will continue to learn how to love and care for yourself as well. I see your humanness, your weaknesses, your fears, your ego, your desire to please. But I see as well that divine spark I placed in you, your

open heart, your yearning to grow in wisdom and understanding, your desire for completeness in me. I am so pleased that you asked me to come into your dream with you, and to help you start opening boxes."

What would the next box contain? I didn't know, but I knew I would not be opening it alone.

I felt a soft breeze rise from the cooling ground, and heard the leaves in the trees begin to dance. Jesus was there with me, and always will be. Through the days. Through the nights. In the hidden and in the revealed. In the lifting breeze and in the wind of the Spirit.