

First Congregational Church of Montague Trinitarian
January 17, 2016
Barbara E Turner Delisle

1 Corinthians 12:1-11, John 2:1-11

A Bit of Resistance?

The act of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana is considered to be the first of seven signs, or miracles, that indicate the divinity of Jesus. Usually that sign is the focus of this passage. But, what draws my attention this time is his statement, “My hour has not yet come.” ...and his mother’s response, “Do as he tells you.”

Jesus complies like a good son when a mother shows such resolve. But, his words would indicate a bit of resistance, yes? Is he resistant to being “outed” at this time? ...resistant to being plunged into what he knows will be a very intense life? Was he not ready for such a public display? Or did he fear what would come next?

Instead of getting into a debate with him, like any “all-knowing” mother Mary confidently and calmly turns to the servants and says, “Do whatever he tells you.” How did she know he could produce the wine that was needed? Does she know what this act will set in motion? I can’t imagine she would do something knowing it would hasten his demise but ...? Her statement seems to indicate that Mary knew full well what he was capable of, even though the miracle at Cana is considered by John to be the first sign of the divine nature of Jesus’ ministry. Is it possible Mary has witnessed Jesus other miracles before?

We know she was amazed when she and Joseph found the 12 year old Jesus sitting with the elders in the synagogue, asking intelligent questions and even teaching from the bible in ways that confounded them. There is also a common account of Jesus as a young child bringing a clay bird to life. “The Infancy Gospel of Thomas” from the Gnostic Society Library (which can be found at gnosis.org) gives account of his divine gifts being witnessed during his early years.

But, again, as interesting and compelling the story of Jesus is, I find Mary’s story to be of equal value. When we first meet her she is a young girl of 15, being visited by an angel of the Lord (Gabriel, which means God is my strength) and told she is going to soon be pregnant and give birth to the Son of God. Mary’s response was to first question but then to offer her complete and utter allegiance to God. ... “be it done to me according to thy word.”

This event, when the angel comes to tell Mary she is to bear the Son of the Most High is called “The Annunciation.” This divine announcement signals the coming of a new way of being. It signals the incarnation, the coming of divine into human form. It is part of the process of regeneration which Mary represents. Of course in order to regenerate one also has to let go. And so there is the grief of releasing the old but also a return to life ...all of which takes courage.

The Annunciation is a metaphor for a summons from within to bring forth something new from one’s creative/spiritual life... something we often refer to as discernment. Regeneration and annunciation are themes that we will embrace during and following our sabbatical time as we grow into what we are to become.

In the Catholic faith there is a feast day for this event. It is called the Feast of The Annunciation and it takes place on March 25 to commemorate that moment when Jesus incarnated, or came from divine to human form, in the womb of Mary.

March 25, 2016 is Good Friday. It is going to be a very special day for Larry and me as we will arrive in Chartres, France and enter into Chartres Cathedral for the first time. This beautiful cathedral located about one hour outside of Paris was built in honor of Mary. It has the oldest labyrinth within its sanctuary and there is a statue of a Black Madonna in its crypt. This is where we will celebrate Easter on our sabbatical journey. What is so remarkable is that I did not know any of this except the labyrinth when I included Chartres Cathedral in the itinerary for our trip. It is almost as if Mary was working in the background to help me to discover her and our Christian roots.

You may be wondering why all this attention to Mary. We are not Catholic after all! Fr. DiMascola of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Turners even questioned it I told him of my interest in the Black Madonna and icons. He was curious why a Protestant would have such an interest in Mary.

But, Mary is a powerful woman in our lives whether we acknowledge her or not. The Christian church is weaker for not recognizing our need to balance between both masculine and feminine divinity. We will benefit greatly by bringing the feminine back into our worship and faith practices. This idea is well grounded both historically and theologically.

Mary, Jesus' mother, is known in Greek as *Theotokos*. The "literal English translations [for Theotokos] include "God-bearer", "Birth-Giver of God" and "the one who gives birth to God." Less accurate translations

include the primarily Western title "Mother of God" (Latin: Mater Dei).

[a] The Council of Ephesus decreed in 431 that Mary is *Theotokos* because her son Jesus is both God and man: one Divine Person with two natures (Divine and human) intimately, hypostatically united.^[5]

[6]" (Wikipedia) (Show icon)

Just last month National Geographic dedicated their magazine to Mary, who they called "The Most Powerful Woman in the World." citing the many miracles that come to people who venerate her and the many ways she has appeared to them. There have been so many Mary related coincidences that have happened during planning and preparing for the sabbatical that I have to suspect that Mary is working through all of it!

For instance, the chapel you will meet in at the Hallelujah Farms retreat center is coincidentally named Mary's chapel. How we, just by happenstance, are scheduled to enter Chartres Cathedral on the feast day of her annunciation is another. Finding out that just next door in Turners Falls at Our Lady of Czestochowa is one of the most well-known and venerated black Madonna's was a great surprise. And discovering that several friends of mine in Wilbraham know the priest, Fr. Charles DiMascola. Also when I met with Fr. Charles I learned there is a place close enough for us to visit in Jamaica, VT that is a replica of Mary's House, one of the sites Larry and I will visit when in Ephesus, Turkey. Although there are more, the last one I will share is that Pastor Chris Fontaine, who will be serving you in my absence, has long studied and admired Mary.

The feminine divine provides a nurturing aspect of spirituality. It reminds us, as our Epistle lesson today reminds us, we each have our own unique gifts. Mary knows this about Jesus and reminds him in a

matter of fact way that he will use his gift to provide drink for the people of Cana.

We are called to do the same. We are called to use our gifts to provide food, water, and shelter for those in need. We are called to use our unique gifts to take care of the sick and the poor. There are many gifts that we can use to lift up and lighten the load of those in need. Many of you participate in the food ministry here... whether helping out on the first Monday of the month in Turners at the community meal, or making a meal for people of this church or community who are homebound or in need of a little assistance at a certain time in their life.

For some, your gift is music which can be soothing and can help us connect with God or can lift our spirits when we are low. Some are teachers, helping children and adults to learn the principals of a life of faith. Where would we be without our faith especially in times of trouble or despair?

Some are gifted in the art of friendship or the art of family making and relationships... some are gifted speakers, some are gifted listeners... We all have a gift that is ours to give to the glory of God.

But, sometimes we may experience a bit of resistance – like Jesus we may feel it is not our time. Like Jesus we may need Mary to clear the way – to set the stage so we can live into our destiny too.

May we each find the support of the divine feminine so we might turn the water of our lives into good wine.

Amen and Amen