

Fifth Sunday of Lent

WRITTEN BY CALL TO ACTION

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APRIL 1, 2019

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FOCUS AREAS: [RACIAL JUSTICE](#)

by John Noble

**I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**

-ISAIAH 43:19

[View the day's full lectionary readings here.](#)

Prayer:

“Come, Holy Spirit, breathe down upon our troubled world.
Shake the tired foundations of our crumbling institutions.
Break the rules that keep you out of all our sacred spaces,
and from the dust and rubble, gather up the seedlings of a new creation.”

-From Diarmuid O'Murchu's Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Reflection:

Isaiah 43 was likely written in the midst of the Babylonian captivity, when Judean exiles faced what felt like never-ending oppression, cultural erasure, and imperial violence at the hands of the warmongering Babylonian Empire. In the face of suppression and oppression, the author of this section of Isaiah offers a unique look into the mind of God. In response to the cry of the poor and the religious “sigh of the oppressed,” God responds by saying, “I am about to do a new thing!”

In this text, God acts like a community organizer. God offers to Her people a vision of a new world, where freedom from captivity is the norm and flourishing wholeness, ecological interdependence, and justice are the principles that undergird this freedom. In his commentary on this text, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Morton says “anyone who thinks the Bible is about improving the status quo is mistaken. It is about revolutionizing it.” In this text, like many texts of liberation, “the biblical message is not reform but reversal.” God has done great things in the past, and She will continue to do great things today.

When I hear “I am doing a new thing,” I hear the chants of community activists: “We are unstoppable! Another world is possible!” And another world is possible. Those of us who claim this text as sacred can never again say “I don’t think that’s politically feasible” or call visions of liberation and justice a “pipe dream.” Racial reparations, global standards of economic equality, an end to all wars, the abolition of exploitative gender roles, and an alternative to the extractive system of racial capitalism that threatens our planet may seem impossible. But this is only true if we view our problems through the lens of the (American) Empire, which tries to stop us from dreaming “impossible dreams.”

Catholics are not called to be a people of political feasibility or realism. We worship a God of liberating redemption and unbound hope, a God who does “a new thing” in the face of the old. We are a people seeking extravagant futures of freedom, not just piecemeal reforms. We are a people of bold utopian hope. And our God hopes with us.

“Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

Questions for Reflection:

- What limits my theological and political imagination?
- How can I “think outside the box” and dream more expansive dreams of freedom and liberation?
- How can my relationship with God and neighbor expand my horizons of the possible?
- What are my dreams for the world?

Suggestion for Almsgiving:

Give to an organization dreaming beyond the political limitations of US Empire:

Worker’s Rights: [Cooperation Jackson](#), [Black Youth Project 100](#), [Movimienta Cosecha](#)

Church Reform: [The Catholic Committee of Appalachia](#), your local Catholic Worker

Prisoner Justice: The [Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee](#), [Black and Pink](#)

Peace: [Voices for Creative Nonviolence](#), [CodePink](#)

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