

Messengers and Messages

What is your favorite memory of your early years in school? I won't have you share today as we have Communion but take just a moment and think about it. For grades 1-5 I went to a school that had no intercom, public address system, or secretary. If the Principal ("Sister Superior") wanted to get a message out, she had to walk to each room or she could send a messenger. If she left the office, she would invariably come to the first room, First Grade, and tap the shoulder of the person in the back of the room and say, "Listen for the phone, dear."

Well, guess who sat in the back of the room in Row 1, Seat 6? Next to me in Row 2, Seat 6 was Sheila Quinn. Either one of us would be tapped for various assignments from Sr. Patricia Anne. One day, I was tapped and saw her motion for me to come out into the hall. As I knew I wasn't "in trouble" for anything I gladly went. She handed me a note with a list of rooms to go to and said, "Take this each classroom, dear, and wait for a response." What joy there was to a) get out of class and b) go throughout the whole building.

It was great until I got to the eighth-grade room. There was some sign on the outside of the door, but I had been told by Sr. Patricia Anne to go to each room and wait for a response. I knocked on the door and out came Sr. Agnes Claudia. Now, Sr. Agnes Claudia was as fearsome as the name. "Can't you read?" she asked. I knew better or was too afraid to say, "No, Sister." She took the note, closed the door, and left me there. I knew that I was supposed to wait for a response but I was petrified. I held my ground and waited. A few moments later, Sr. Agnes Claudia came back, handed me the note, and said sweetly, "Thank you very much." I wish I had known what was in that note. I couldn't even be tempted because it was written in cursive; we hadn't yet learned cursive in first grade. However, based on the response, it must have been important.

Now, some messengers, like a first grader, are not terribly important but it is the message that means something to the ones who hear it. Depending on the message, though, the reputation of the messenger can go a long way to give credence to the actual message. The message that the author of the letter to the Hebrews wanted to deliver was meant to be heard. The identity of the author has never been confirmed. While some attribute it to Paul, it isn't exactly written in the style of Paul. Also, Paul and Peter had a "pact" of sorts that Paul would preach and evangelize to the Gentiles while Peter would do the same for those of the Jewish faith. So why would Paul write to the Hebrews? Anyhow, while messengers can be important, we must turn our focus to the message of the letter to the Hebrews.

We are reminded that, throughout history, God made promises to people that were fulfilled. He promised to give Abraham many descendants which came to fruition through his grandson, Jacob. He showed the Promised Land to Moses. As told in the story of Creation, God puts us in charge of the land. And then we learn that we, as followers of Christ, have been gifted with the Incarnation, that God is truly Divine and human. It is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to humankind to send a Messiah and did so with his Son, Jesus.

After the author of Hebrews thoroughly explains Jesus as the Son of God, he proceeds to proclaim the humanity of Jesus. (Hence, the Incarnation.) What greater argument for Jesus' humanity can there be than Jesus suffering—suffering even unto death. Jesus, the Son incarnate, literally taking on flesh, put himself in the same vulnerability as flesh, a position a little lower than the angels. But from that position he has been exalted now above all. He has imparted to flesh his holiness. That holiness is available to all who will receive him.

Before he died, he had one last meal with his disciples. This Sunday, Christians from all over the world celebrate World Communion Sunday. We have this sacred meal to remember

that Christ died for all of us but left us with something to commemorate. We use this as a sign of our faith—for those who believe or seek to believe—and share this in worship this day. This message is unavoidable. Jesus gave us the ultimate sacrifice. The hymn tell us, We remember how you loved us to your death. And still, we celebrate for you are with us here. “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in your midst.” And, we believe that we will see him when he comes again. We’ve said it before and we’ll say it again. The message tells us that we remember, we celebrate, and we believe. What a great message! Amen!