

As we come to the end of the Season of Creation, we are reflecting at all of our liturgies this weekend in the light of the Gospel.

This evening in our gospel reading, we find Jesus and his companions engaged with an important question: does faith come in different sizes? Does God give some people greater faith than others?

If this is the case, the apostles say, "Increase our faith". Give us the supersize of what we need. Perhaps we have felt the same way in this Season of Creation as we try to connect with the enormity and urgency of caring for our common home. As we allow ourselves to come to deeper understanding of the ecological crisis that we face, we can feel small and diminished in our efforts.

The task before us in working towards environmental justice and saving our planet for our future generations, our children, nieces and nephews and grandchildren, seems overwhelming. It's frightening how quickly we must start to turn the tide of the destruction we have inflicted on God's creation and vulnerable peoples with our consumption. The task seems as improbable as "uprooting a mulberry tree and planting it in the sea".

We can empathize with the apostles and might want to join them in asking for the supersize of what we need. How do we imagine Jesus responding in this gospel scene as he listens to this plea? Is he compassionate with his companions, or fed-up? Is he patient or frustrated here?

I imagine Jesus responds to his companions with kindness, mixed with a good amount of snarkiness that stops them in their tracks:

"My friends" Jesus might say, "God doesn't dole out faith, love and mercy to all of you in different sizes. God's pours out in equal measure. So God will not be supersizing you. But you can take that little seed, that dwells within, and you can nurture and care for it, and see what happens with God".

If we are wondering how we can grow our capacity to trust in the work of God, Jesus goes on to share a story with us. At first glance, this parable of the servant coming to the table, and serving before eating, seems jarring to us. We are used to Jesus speaking of table fellowship with all welcomed as equals at the meal. In our gospel today, Jesus might be asking us to consider servant leadership as an attitude, and a state of mind to embrace.

Sometimes in life we need to let our egos take a backseat and allow God to return to the driver's seat. In this Season of Creation, the time is right to restore our right relationship with God. As St. Ignatius would say, we must allow the "Creator to work more surely in his creature". This is an invitation to allow God to tug at our hearts with the wonder of creation, melt our resistance, and lead us to the right attitude for tackling the task at hand.

When there is work to be done, we just show up and do it. Our actions are offered with humility and trust that God will guide our actions however small they might seem. In this Season of Creation, it has been consoling to remember that the root of the word humility is humus, which means being "grounded" and "of the earth". To work for environmental justice, we need to show up in our ordinary lives, in our very small ways, very grounded and of the earth. We need to trust that God has already given us everything we need to find right relationship with God, creation and humanity. And we

do this not alone, but together in community, in our St. Ignatius community and in our global community.

I have just returned from our Parish Retreat at Eastern Point where we have been praying with the Season of Creation theme for this year, "The Web of Life: Diversity as God's Blessing. We were just a small group of forty people, but I found our prayer together to be powerful and renewing. We began Friday evening remembering our Ignatian worldview that everything in creation is a gift, given by a loving Creator. We reflected that this gift is not earned or measured out by anything we do, but poured out daily, as sure as the sunrise that greeted us Saturday morning.

We settled into this for a whole day surrounded by the beauty of creation, the ocean and waves, the sky, sun and moon rising. We marveled at the creatures that came out of the woods; rabbits, turkeys, and a fox, and watched seals basking in the sun in the bay. By Saturday evening, we were ready to stop to give thanks with a renewed sense of wonder for the biodiversity in God's creation.

In a prayer service, we asked for forgiveness and healing for all the many ways we have not treasured this gift and appreciated our human diversity as God's blessing. Having mangled and tangled God's web of life, we acknowledged our structural sins of racism and sexism, homophobia and xenophobia, that prevent us from appreciating our differences and the variety of ways that we are made in God's image.

And so we return to our St. Ignatius community renewed in our experience that diversity in creation and humanity is indeed God's blessing for us all. As I transition from retreat to ordinary days, I feel committed to hit the pause button as often as I can to find moments to marvel at God's creation. I know I have been assisted in this Season of Creation with the mini challenges that were shared with us through the Ignatian Solidarity Network. Some of you participated in the Ignatian Carbon Challenge this past month. I found my tiny mustard seed efforts to partake in more plant-based meals to be not so hard at all, and actually delicious! If I can try to keep up my little bit, it grows alongside others and together we actually shrink the carbon footprint.

These mini challenges don't end with the Season of Creation. I'll give you a little preview of what's coming up for the Season of Advent. The mini challenge is to choose one item each day to gift, upcycle or donate while practicing mindful consumption and simplicity of time. I can see it now: when my three adult children come home for Thanksgiving, I will give them time to look through all their stuff that they have left behind. Whatever they don't want to take back with them to their apartments, can be part of my mini challenge. Or maybe they will join in with me to upcycle and donate, and together, we can be part of reducing the carbon footprint.

As we go forth into the coming week, God is with us, reassuring us that our simple efforts are enough. There's no need to increase or supersize. Rather we are called to decrease and downsize, to be humble of heart and grounded and of the earth. That little mustard seed that is planted, the image of God that dwells within, is all that we need.