

**Grain**

**“**Whatever you do, you begin from the premise that

you’re human together.” –Musimbi Kanyoro

Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

Field 21Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” Luke 3: 21-22

**Thoughts**

In a news review of 2021, “Time Magazine” included an article about the Olympian artistic gymnast, Simone Biles. In 2018, Biles was one of more than 150 women to come forward, but the only survivor still competing, to speak out against the former osteopathic physician, Larry Nassar, for assaulting them. Biles entered therapy because of the trauma Nassar caused her. She remained committed to soaring as a gymnast. But in the middle of the 2021 Olympics, which she had trained five years for, and while COVID prevented her from receiving family support in Tokyo, her mental health began to unravel. She said her mind and body weren’t in sync and that it would be dangerous to compete.  Biles withdrew from the gymnast team competition. Her critics claimed she was weak and disappointing, but so many others recognized her as heroic. “It showed us that we are more than the sport, that we are human beings who also can have days that are hard. It really humanized us.” Her decision also spurred broader discussions about mental health.

At this time of year, counselors seem to become busier. There are those who make New Year’s resolutions to improve their mental health. But in other cases, people seek recovery from being knocked over by grief during Christmas. Maybe some found they weren’t measuring up to expectations of family members and that misunderstandings grew. Some experienced an anxious clash between how they view themselves and the old versions of their identities still held by others.

This is also a time of year to emphasize our identity as baptized children of God. In the story about Jesus’ baptism, as well as during each baptism at church, we recall God’s promise to us in our own baptism. The promise is about the forgiveness of sins but also about having an identity defined in our relationship with God through Christ.

A lesser-known part of Simon Biles’ journey is the spiritual aspect. As a practicing Catholic, she claimed her reliance on God, says Lauren Windle in her article, “’God is the one who directs my life.”’ Biles views her athletic ability as a gift from God to steward and her faith as what guides her in times of success and failure. God is with all of us during both, inviting us to recall who we are.

Reviewing our 2021, remember how God walked with you. Realize your identity in baptism. From that part of who we are in the cave of our hearts may our actions flow in 2022. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy