



Grain

"We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others.

—Thomas Merton

Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

Field

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Mt. 3:13-17

Thoughts

What would it be like to hand over your homeland? Elizabeth Drayson in *The Moor's Last Stand* draws you into the grief of King Boadil, the last sultan of Granada, Spain. He gave the Muslim kingdom to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. It was the beginning of a new Christian monarchy at the cost of another civilization that had developed and ruled for more than seven centuries. Boadil entered an internal exile and then eventually was forced out of Spain into an external exile. Many of his former subjects accused him of being a traitor. Some claimed that even his mother criticized him for not putting up a fight. His story, written by the winners, interpreted Boadil as a weak leader. But other versions of history revealed he had no good choices and that in the face of certain defeat, he helped prevent the complete destruction of Granada. The last sultan was later even uplifted as a symbol of strength and heroism, especially by poets and artists.

Still, Boadil lost. And we are more attracted to winners, especially when they interpret history. But we're also drawn to the ones who lose when we can get a glimpse into their grief, gain new insights into their lives and humanity, and relate to their imperfections. We may recall when we have left a community, a relationship, or workplace not on the best of terms and felt anxious about how others might tell our story. What seemed to help shape our identity altered or disappeared and we experienced a sort of internal exile.

At this time of year, in light of Christmas and Epiphany, we know that Mary and Joseph protected Jesus from Herod by escaping to Egypt as refugees and then later dwelled in the unpopular town of Nazareth. From this background, Jesus emerged to be baptized in the wilderness, where God confirmed his identity. We also have an identity in our baptism, one in which we don't live just for ourselves or completely on our own. Within or regardless of our present or past internal exiles, God knows our real stories and helps us to shape them. With that in mind, let us pray for all who experience external exiles: climate refugees and those at risk of being separated from their homelands because of war. We pray for Australia, Iran, and the United States. In which ways are our stories not so distant from one another? Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy Crane