

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Nov 29th 2013

Recently I agreed to give three significant presentations over a five-day period of time. To prepare, I had to spend countless hours doing research, editing the presentations and putting together Power Point slides. I experienced a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety.

A couple of days before the first presentation, I had a dream that I walked into a roomful of people who were waiting for me to give my presentation and I wasn't ready. In fact, I hadn't even put one moment into preparing it so I simply stood frozen in place in front of everyone as I attempted to verbalize something meaningful from the nothingness in my head. It was definitely a nightmare. When I woke up with my heart pounding, I felt great relief pour over me as I realized that my terrible public moment had only been a dream.

The grace from the dream was that I recognized how my fear, stress and anxiety had been blocking me from experiencing the goodness, excitement and anticipation of giving the presentations on topics for which I had a lot of passion. By allowing the negative feelings to shut down the positive aspect of my work, I had lost sight of the countless gifts which had emerged. I began to pray, inviting God to walk with me during the preparation time and during the presentations. I also prayed that I could recognize what was blocking me from having a life-giving experience. The peace that came upon me was a gift from God and all three presentations went well.

Today's reading from Daniel describes frightening dream-like visions which Daniel saw during the night. The visions Daniel saw were quite terrifying and violent. Toward the end of the visions, Daniel saw a hopeful sign: One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven and Daniel believed that God had intervened. The point of all the visions is that God will soon intervene to destroy all evil so that those who stand firm in their faith will triumph. (Newsom, Carol A. and Ringe, Sharon H. eds., *The Women's Bible Commentary*, (Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky.)

The moral is that (people) of faith can resist temptation and conquer adversity. (The New American Bible: The New Catholic Translation, Catholic Bible Press.)

We may not have monstrous-type lions with eagle wings or bears with tusks or leopards with four heads in our dreams but what are the challenges which block us from God, self and one another? How does fear control us and what are we missing?

Susan Naatz