

February 13, 2024



Daily Reflections

WATCH OUT!

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

"Watch out, guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

MARK 8:15

Reflection

Mardi Gras greetings of joyful exuberance on this Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, when the season of repentance begins. I prefer to see Lent as "the springtime of the soul!" A time of reflection, refocusing my sights on God, and opening me to more intentional receptivity to the grace of ongoing conversion. How appropriate it seems that on the eve of Ash Wednesday, the gospel invites us to reflect on the caution Jesus gives his apostle against ***the "leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."*** This caution comes on the heels of another encounter of challenge and trickery on the part of the temple leaders.

Scripture often uses leaven or yeast as a symbol for false teachings or sin that spreads easily and influences others to join in the sinful behavior or attitude. The metaphor of “yeast and leaven” cautions us to beware of falling into self-righteousness, rigid adherence to law, and a lording position and power over others, as was demonstrated by Herod and some of the Pharisees. The first reading today from the letter of James reminds me that ***“each person is tempted when lured and enticed by his [unholy] desire. Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity, it gives birth to death.” James 1:13***

I am keenly aware of the human propensity toward self-righteousness that takes over more easily when focused on proving one’s position, self-protection in a moment of uncertainty, striving after gain or control, and one’s need for self-importance before others. This includes anyone that is different, holding an alternative perspective and stance in life that challenge closely held perspectives.

Might this be the sin of basically good, law-abiding, faith-filled people? There is the tendency to fall prey to judgment and condemnation, discounting or attacking anyone who offends. This process of “leavening” results in alienation and division.

As I reflect on the intense divisions in our nation, church, and world, all that is written above is made manifest. A Lenten revival is certainly required to heal my soul and our collective global soul. Come Spirit of God, transform us all to be the people of God’s Great Love in attitude and deed.



Brown Baguettes Still Life Composition
Photo by Marina Leonova

For Pondering

- What is the landscape of my own self-righteous slide into sin?
 - How do I reflect on the "leaven" of which I am being cautioned to be aware?
 - What grace of God's love for me do I need to lead me to personal transformation?
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For Prayer

*God of the journey,
I praise and thank you for your invitation to reflect on all that inhibits me
from being the best person you have called me to be.
Show me all that blocks me from being more your own
and from loving as you love.
Reveal the subtle influences that cause me to stumble into sin.
Teach me your ways and inspire my prayer and reflection
in the days ahead.
Amen.*

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