

Jesus Christ, Fire-Starter

Dr. Rosemary Murphy

Jesus Christ, Fire-Starter

The movie, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, is the story of Kya, “the marsh girl” who survives abandonment, abuse, and the accusation of murder, through her passion for drawing the creatures of the marsh. Through her artwork, Kya is able to endure suffering and, when her work is published, she becomes a renowned naturalist. Passion drives her accomplishments and mission—her desire to share the beauty of the marsh.

For disciples of Jesus Christ, passion for carrying on his mission is an essential strength. This Sunday’s Gospel (Luke 12: 49-53) which seems very harsh in tone, conveys the message that Christian discipleship is not for the tepid. Luke gives his readers a rare glimpse into the passionate side of a Savior who will suffer the “baptism” of death on the cross for all of us.

In today’s Gospel scene, Jesus in a prophetic role. He appears as unconventional as John the Baptist to the point where it is hard for the reader to recognize and accept this very different Jesus. Where is the Father’s Only “Peace be with you” Son, sent to bring harmony and love to our world? As prophet, Jesus does what prophets are supposed to do—be a catalyst, a fire-starter, a mover and a shaker. Generally, stir things up.

The Old Testament God of Israel called out prophets to help form God’s people. The prophets were radical figures delivering radical messages of redemption through a new covenant. God spoke to Israel, “You will be my people and I will be your God.” (Jeremiah 24:7) This covenant meant that God’s love was never ending and God’s people were committed to a lifestyle of fidelity.

Today, Jesus speaks to us, his faithful disciples. He has not come to break up our families, rather he calls us to a new direction. We are to move outside of family and kinship—in other words, our comfort zone—and to pursue our passion for Jesus’ mission. We do that, each one of us, according to our unique talents and the graces that God provides for the work of Christian discipleship. And, at the end of our story, those of us who are most passionate for God’s good work will be the greatest peace makers.