Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Spirituality



Turkey-backed Syrian rebel fighters hand bread to civilians in the border city of Tal Abyad, Syria, Oct.15, 2019. Humanitarian concerns are growing as people caught in the crosshairs of the Turkish incursion into northeastern Syria try to flee for safety, and groups are scrambling to aid them. (CNS/Reuters/Khalil Ashawi)



by Sr. Nicole Trahan

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For many years I've had a certain affinity for the medieval German mystic, Meister Eckhart. As we close the Christmas season and look towards an uncertain year ahead, I am struck by a quote attributed to him:

> We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us.

I am also reminded of a quote from Blessed Adele de Batz de Trenquelleon, foundress of the Marianist Sisters, who wrote in her letters:

> My good and dear friend, I come to wish you a blessed New Year. My wish is that you profit by the days the Lord is good enough to grant us and that, at the end of this year, we will be better than we are now. Like the Magi, my dear friend, let us not return from the crib by the same route. That is, let us lead an entirely new life, a changed one, transformed in God.

What difference has the celebration of Christmas this year made in me? How am I different because we prayed and celebrated, cooked and decorated? In what ways am I called now to manifest the presence of Jesus in our day and time? Am I better able to bear witness to the presence of Jesus and to the kingdom of God now because of our celebration of the Christmas season? Important questions for all of us, no doubt.

As I look at the state of our world today and I consider what's happening in Australia, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, on the U.S. southern border, our cities, our neighborhoods, and too many other places, I am overwhelmed by what I see. How can I possibly respond? We learn that we are called to build the kingdom of God — a kingdom of peace, mercy, compassion, love, justice. It can be difficult to see how

this is possible with the amount of trouble facing our world.

On the Tuesday after Epiphany we read from Mark's Gospel an account of Jesus feeding the "vast crowd." We all know the story. There were thousands gathered to listen to Jesus. It was getting late and the apostles suggest that Jesus send the crowd away so they can get something to eat. Instead, Jesus says, "Give them some food yourselves." It must have seemed preposterous. They had a few loaves of bread and a few fish. This is what they had to feed the crowd. There's no way it was enough. And yet Jesus took it, blessed it, broke it and had it distributed. And it was enough.

This passage gives me hope. The same is true of us and what we can offer to our broken world. It might seem preposterous because we don't have much. How can I do anything to address the many cases of systemic injustice, oppression, environmental degradation? But if we give it freely and allow Jesus to transform our gift, it can be enough for the situations in which we find ourselves.

As this Christmas season ends and we re-enter ordinary time, I consider my gift of self to the many instances of brokenness in our society and in our world. How am I called, in whatever small or large ways, to bear witness to the presence of Jesus and build the kingdom? In what way(s) has the celebration of Christmas opened my heart and my eyes and strengthened my trust?

I do not yet have the answers. And I may never have complete or clear answers, but let us pray with each other as we live into the answers — offering our gifts to the One who can feed the multitudes if we but offer what we have to give.

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