

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Revised Common Lectionary)/Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Vatican II Lectionary), July 21, 2019, Year C. Posted on American Society of Missiology website, MissionalPreacher, May 2019.

Fifty years ago yesterday, on July 20, 1969, Presbyterian Ruling Elder Buzz Aldrin celebrated the Lord's Supper on the moon. The first food and drink consumed on the moon was the blessed bread and wine from Aldrin's church, Webster Presbyterian, near Houston, TX.

Each year, on the Sunday closest to July 20, Webster Presbyterian holds its Lunar Communion Sunday. This year, many Christian Churches will be joining Webster in spirit. The co-director of the Presbyterian Office of Worship, David Gambrell, has suggested that the name be changed to Cosmic Communion Sunday.

Every Christian who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and is baptized is a witness to what Jesus has accomplished on our planet. Aldrin's action reminds us deeply that Jesus is Lord and Savior not only of humans, but of everything animate and inanimate on our planet and its satellite.

The Scripture readings for today, especially St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians, help us appreciate what Aldrin's Church and he did. When St. Paul stuns us by stating that something is missing in the sufferings of Christ, and that he, Paul, fills up what is missing, we begin to appreciate the vital importance of our actions. Presbyterian Biblical scholar William Barclay calls Paul's statement "a daring thought" ([The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians, The Daily Study Bible Series, rev. ed., 1975, p. 126](#)).

St. Paul continues Colossians by explaining that the mystery hidden in ages past is now unfolded, with Jesus at the center. Christ is our hope of glory, and every Christian is called to proclaim that glory. Webster Presbyterian Church went as far as the moon to do it.

What are we and our church doing to proclaim the mystery of Christ, our hope of glory? Most of us will not be astronauts, but Paul makes it clear that every Christian in every age is called to make Christ known to every person and race and culture.

When poet laureate Archibald Macleish reflected on humans circling the moon, Christmas Eve, 1969, he linked our adventure with humility. His short essay "Riders on Earth Together," concluded with these moving lines: "To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold--brothers who know now they are truly brothers."

Our Gospel today proposes the account of Martha and Mary, Martha busy with so many tasks of hospitality; Mary seated at the Lord's feet. We note that Jesus does not reject Martha's ministry. He calls Mary's the better part, telling us that both the tasks of hospitality and the choice of being at His feet in admiration, are important.

Is it probable that Aldrin's celebration of Communion is the more important part, but the work of getting to the moon and exploring it are necessary too? This may lead us back to Paul's view that

somehow he fills up what is lacking in Christ's suffering. Christian ministry is varied, with so much of it hidden.

Missiologist Stephen Bevans, SVD, underlined the new, cosmic dimension of our joint witness, when he wrote "to think in terms of the vast amount of time, the 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang, to think of the vastness of space in this universe of billions of light-years in diameter, to think in terms of the complexity of cosmic and biologic evolution--such a perspective changes completely our understanding of doctrines like creation, redemption, Christology, ecclesiology, and mission itself" ("My Pilgrimage in Mission, " International Bulletin of Mission Research 43 [Jan. 2019, 1]:89).

If Christ's "blood is on the rose, and in the stars the glory of His eyes" (Joseph Mary Plunkett), is it not the responsibility and privilege of every Christian to make that known? Between the roses in our home gardens and the dust of the moon?

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