

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD

Gospel Illustration

UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS TO THE GROUND
by Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Share with each other as a family a big dream that each of you has? Talk about each other's dreams and how they might grow. Does your dream grow Jesus' dream of the furthering of the Kingdom of God?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: SURRENDER TO GROWTH
BLOSSOMING

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: As a family make a list of big dreamers. Include contemporary people and be inclusive including men and women and people from many cultural backgrounds. Now make a list of historical figures and Saints. Choose 2 dreamers from today, from history, and from our Catholic Saints. Have each person in the family do some research on one person to find out how their dreams began as a seed. What inspired its growth and what kind of support did they find to grow it. How did it contribute to growing the world and the kingdom of God? And how does this person inspire you to dream.

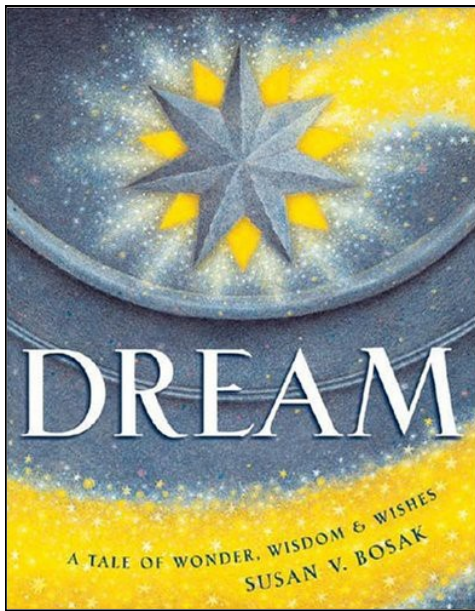


"...unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." ~ John 12:24

Living Grace

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT
CYCLE B

"GOD'S GLORY SPRINGS FORTH FROM THE SEED"



Fifteen top children's books illustrators each offer a gorgeously illustrated page to complement quotations from historical wisdom in a beautifully told, multilayered poetic story about life's hopes and dreams from childhood to adulthood. **Dream: A Tale of Wonder, Wisdom & Wishes** story begins at the end of the rainbow with the Dream Chest, a magical portal between "what is" and "what can be." A wise old star emerges as your guide and asks, "What's your dream?" You're whisked away on a colorful journey of a lifetime. Whoosh through the teddy bears and castles of childhood. Whoosh again into the labyrinths and mountains of adolescence and adulthood. There are stops along the way to meet famous people in the Club of Dreamers, and explore inventions and discoveries through history. You can also hunt in each illustration for a hidden star - and make a new wish with each one you find! The story culminates with a life-giving Dream Tree, because "the world at its best is green... the color of Go and the color of Grow." The wise old star reminds the reader that you need "the Believe of childhood, the Do of youth, and the Think of experience - you need all three." The old star then encourages you to find a dream and reach for the stars: "Be a dreamer... dream a dream, your very own dream."

Sunday Gospel

JOHN 12:20-33

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world Will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say?
'Father, save me from this hour?'
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.
Father, glorify your name."
Then a voice came from heaven,
"I have glorified it and will glorify it again."
The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder;
but others said, "An angel has spoken to him."
Jesus answered and said,
"This voice did not come for my sake but for yours.
Now is the time of judgment on this world;
now the ruler of this world will be driven out.
And when I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw everyone to myself."
He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.

Read aloud video link:
DREAM: A TALE OF WONDER, WISDOM & WISHES
Written by Susan V. Bosak

Art & Faith

EXPLORING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



KANSAS SUMMER WHEAT AND STORM PANORAMA
Photograph by James Watkins ~ 2010
Kansas, USA

EXPLORING THE ART:

FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHER

"Photography was originally a way for me to provide a background for the poetry that I began writing while out on the road about 6 or 7 years ago. Starting with a small 5 MP Sony hand held, which at the time was very expensive to me, then to a Nikon d80 with kit lenses, and on to a d300 with a very handy nkkor 18-200nr plus a Sigma10-20.wide angle. The only reason I chose landscapes was to have a "large sky" backdrop for the printed words and poetry. Very quickly the digital photography became just as important as the poetry. I also found out that I was ruining the beautiful pictures by writing all over them...and with Flickr...I could actually move the poetry/words down to the comment section and display them WITH the pictures. It took about three years to get up to speed with post processing in Photoshop and learn the various techniques needed to get where I wanted to go with everything photography. HDR really has been the "cherry on top," as it allows my imagination to be unlimited. It can surely be overblown...but with some discretion...becomes an important weapon in the toolbox. My interest in poetry stems from writing lyrics and playing guitar for quite a while. I have always been interested in music and art. The following exhibit is only where I stand so far...with plans to move up to full frame and expand as I can...as my wife and I continue travel with Fed Ex Custom Critical as owner operators...all over this beautiful country. Eventually I will have a book with pictures on one page with poetry on a facing page."

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

GOD'S GLORY IS HIDDEN IN THE SEED OF OUR DREAMS.

When the world comes out to see Jesus, notice it is the Greeks, not his followers. Now with the world watching, Jesus tells his apostles that his hour has come. John's intent is to remind the reader that God's dream for Jesus wasn't to build a new church or to teach and prophesize only. He came to redeem the WHOLE world. Now that the world is engaged, Jesus declares that his hour has come to be glorified. It is time for the dream God has for his purpose to blossom. Jesus uses the metaphor of the seed to prepare them.

Our children's story helps us grasp too what is emerging for Jesus. All dreams begin with a seed of inspiration. Dreams too, have a period of germination; they can't be seen hidden in the darkness of our inner life and imagination. The seed needs water, soil, and nutrients to germinate. It's the same way with our dreams. We need the love and encouragement of our friends, family, God's word, and the Christian community for our dreams to grow. It is the work and action of the Holy Spirit that gives the dream the life force it needs to develop to a place where it's ready to blossom.

However, sometimes like Jesus in the desert, the Holy Spirit is all we have. Often our family and friends fear the changes they see happening in us. With many of the saints, the church feared their call and prophetic voice that was in them. People and institutions get set in their ways and fear letting go. We can fear letting go also. The certainty of things the way they are can feel a lot safer. That's what the call of Jesus to "lose our life" can be all about. Once the seed begins to burst forth, take root, the journey of transformational growth begins. It's the same way with our dreams. When embraced, it might hurt a bit as it breaks out. Resistance has to be pushed through for growth and maturation to take place. It's helpful to see resistance assists in growth, but it is uncomfortable and it can hurt. Continuing on the path of surrender is the way through. If we get stuck in the middle it can be very painful. You won't fit with the old seeds and you haven't yet emerged in the glory of the blossomed flower. Jesus says, "He who loves his life loses it".

The Glory of God is the human person fully alive (St. Anselm). When Jesus was resurrected he didn't look the same. The flower is not the same as the plant, yet it is all one. Through pain and surrender, we are freed for resurrected life. Like Jesus, we too fill this world with God's Grace and Glory. And that is Easter ~ Dream it!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: What is your definition of a dream? Have you had one favorite color your whole life? Has it changed? Do you remember your dreams at night? Do you daydream, what about? What color is your dream?

THE CHILDRENS' STORY: Do you have a big idea, something new in the world that will make it a better place? Who do you know that grew their dream? How did it start, how did it grow? Who did they need to help them make their dream come true?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Jesus tells us in this gospel that God's life is in the seed not the shell. What do you think that means? What does that look like in nature, do seeds or shells make a plant grow? What does Jesus mean if we hang on to our outside we lose our life?

Shells have a purpose, they protect the growth, but when it's time, it has to break for the seed to grow. How do we too lose our life if we can't let go? How does that lesson of nature apply to growing the Kingdom of God? How do our dreams begin and grow like seeds?

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Take a night to come together as a family and make a calendar of significant dates in these Dreamer's lives and illustrate their contributions. Close with a prayer asking God to show each of you what a dream God is growing in you and pray for the grace to surrender to it. Is there a dream God might be inspiring for your family to grow?

Biblical Background

JOHN 12:20-33

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Jesus is teaching on the Temple Mount, in the shadow of the Temple itself. This large public gathering space was constructed to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who came to worship in Jerusalem on a yearly basis. The Temple Mount was the largest outdoor gathering space in the Roman Empire at that time and would remain the largest such space for the next two hundred years. Jesus would be seated and his disciples would stand around to listen to him teach. The only way to gain access to the teacher is through an intermediary; in this case the Apostle Philip. The Apostles would have access to Jesus and have the opportunity to interrupt Jesus as he was teaching. This seems to be what the "Greeks" are requesting Philip to do on their behalf. They come to Jesus with a question of their own.

TERMS: *Greeks* This would be a general category that could also be translated as "gentiles" or more specifically "non-Jewish people". Greeks (gentiles) were welcome on the Temple Mount and would have been enamored of Jesus and his large band of disciples. Sometimes these "Greeks" were known as "God Fearers" because they were impressed with the way the Jewish people related to their God and to one another. St. Luke, author of the third synoptic Gospel, was a Greek and a God Fearer by this definition. He came to faith in Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah through St. Paul's preaching in the synagogue at Troas.

Son of Man This is a Messianic title that Jesus appropriates for himself. The reference is found in Daniel 7:13-14 in a vision gifted to the Prophet. In the vision one like a "son of man" given an eternal reign by the command of God. This is the origin of the Messianic title. When Jesus calls himself the Son of Man he is stating clearly that he is the Messiah of Israel.

Lifted up This is a reference to the way that Jesus would die, as a victim crucified. This assertion would have been very difficult for his disciples to hear.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: An outsider can only gain access to the teacher through the intercession of intermediaries; in this case through the Apostles Philip and Andrew. We note that both of these Apostles were from Bethsaida. Perhaps these Greeks, gentiles, may have also been from the same village. Perhaps they knew Philip and Andrew and hoped that this would be enough to get them in front of Jesus where they intended to ask him a question. "Jesus answered them", but we don't know what they asked the Lord. It appears that they were wondering if this was the time for the Messiah to reveal himself to the world. Jesus responds to some sort of a question with the assertion that the hour (or time) has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And he was, when the voice of God spoke from the heavens announcing that God is honoring the Son.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Jesus indicates the hour has arrived and that he be lifted up from the earth to die at the hands of the Romans and at the request of the religious leaders among the Jews. No one saw this coming. The fact that Jesus was willing to lay down his life was one thing, but that he would do so in such a shameful way as a crucified victim was unthinkable. That is why, just after our Gospel reading ends, some in the crowd wonder what Jesus is talking about. "Who exactly is this Son of Man?" they wonder aloud. Jesus knows that he has to die so that the ruler of this world will be driven out. Who is the ruler of this world? Satan, who holds sway over men and women through their fear of death and the finality of the grave. Jesus will die only to rise on the other side. He will conquer death once and for all. Evil will not have a hold on this world any longer.