

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 25, 2018

A Little Discomfort Goes A Long Way

I've never heard of someone wanting to try a new song at a funeral. When faced with the loss and uncertainty that accompanies death, many find comfort at the funeral with music they know. When our life has too much change and uncertainty, we look for comfort in the familiar.

Most of us find comfort in routines; it makes us feel at ease and in control. But when routine reaches the level of boredom, some of us start looking for excitement. We may turn to screens (television or internet), or shopping, or a vacation – anything that will be uncertain enough to keep things interesting.

Routine in our life of faith brings comfort, but too much routine can dull our spirit. We end up saying things like, "I don't get anything out of Mass anymore." Perhaps what is needed is not a change in the Mass, but to be more alert to the needs of those around us, to expand our world of concern. Mass is not boring when we bring to it the concerns and needs of those we know and care about.

Today is the second to last Sunday of our liturgical year, and in our gospel, Jesus speaks of the end of the world. He does this in part to prepare his disciples for his own passion and death, and to encourage them – and us – to be watchful, to avoid routine and boredom. Jesus doesn't want us to be afraid, only alert – to pay attention, and be ready. If we never know "that day or hour," we want to be ready all the time, and we'll never be bored.

Expanding our world of concerns to include others – changing ourselves – is a way to be ready all the time but can be uncomfortable. The challenge is to get past the initial desire to avoid change, to tolerate a bit of discomfort, so we can grow. A little discomfort goes a long way in our spiritual growth.

As we end the liturgical year and prepare for Advent, let's think about how we might increase our watchfulness and look outside of ourselves to the needs of others.

Jesus, help me to be watchful – of myself – and of the needs of those around me. When you want me to change, I will not be afraid for I know you are with me.

-Rob Sgambelluri (sgambelluri.rob@gmail.com)