



THE DAY OF PENTECOST

4 June 2006

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104

Romans 8:22-27

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Many of you know that,
in addition to my work
as Minister of Education and Discipleship at St. Paul,
I also work with women as a birth doula,
providing emotional,
physical
and informational support,
to pregnant women and their partners,
before, during and after birth.

Although I have not yet given birth myself,
I have been honored to be with many women and their families
during this sacred time,
and have learned a great deal
about the process of labor and birth.

Now, if you've seen depictions of labor on television
you might think that birth is something that happens very quickly,
in a flurry -
the water breaks,
everyone panics
and suddenly the baby is crying.

While there are some births that happen very quickly,
this is the exception,
not the norm.
If you've given birth yourself
or have been with someone who has,
you know that television portrayals of birth are not very accurate.
Normally, labor is a fairly long process,
that necessitates a great deal of patience from all those involved.

Ademas de mi trabajo aqui en la Iglesia Luterana San Pablo
tambien trabajo con mujeres que estan aliviandose,
dandoles apoyo espiritual, emocional, y fisico.
No he tenido mi propio hijo todavia,
pero he aprendido mucho sobre los partos en ese trabajo.
La television nos ensenya que el parto es algo muy rapido,
pero en realidad es un proceso mas o menos largo.

In today's reading from Romans

Paul speaks of

"the whole creation...groaning in labor pains,
and not only creation,
but we ourselves."

Paul's words call to mind the image of a woman
responding to the painful contractions of labor.

However, while it is painful,
it is also transformational.

It brings new life into the world.

With the birth of a child, parents and families are also born.

With the birth of a child, there is new hope.

Birth,

Particularly in the Jewish and pagan cultures of Paul's day,
speaks of new life that is at the same time the mother's own life,
delighting her,
despite the pain of labor,
with a fresh fulfillment.

In this text

Paul is speaking of the sounds,
the groaning and moaning
that accompanies
the transformation of creation.

The Holy Spirit,
moving in the creation
is ever changing, transforming and reshaping that very creation.

El texto de Romanos hoy habla de los dolores del parto,
los dolores que acompañan la transformación de vida
pero en vez de hablar de la transformación que ocurre
cuando una da la luz,
el está hablando de los dolores que ocurren con
la transformación de la creación
y de nosotros entre esta creación.

What does this transformed world look like?

Is it a world

where everyone has equal access to food,
shelter,
clothing
health care
and an education?

A world in which the potential of individuals and communities
is not restricted by their age,
race,
socio-economic or marital status,
physical or mental capacities,
gender identity
or sexual orientation?

No doubt,

God has a much larger vision for the transformation of the world
than I could ever imagine.

But no matter exactly what shape that transformation takes,
Paul points to the pain and labor of that change.

¿Como ve un mundo transformado?

¿Un mundo donde todos tienen comida,
educación, cuidado médico?

¿Un mundo donde la edad, raza, estado socioeconómico o matrimonial, las capacidades físicas o mentales,
identidad de género u orientación sexual no haga una diferencia en las oportunidades que uno tiene en la
vida?

No tengo duda que Dios tenga una imagen
todavía mas grande que eso para la transformación de la creación.
Pero, de todos modos la transformación va a incluir
el dolor y trabajo de viene con cambio.

In addition to creation groaning in labor pains,
Paul also speaks of us,
the people of God,
groaning,
as if in labor,
in anticipation of our adoption into God's family,
and the redemption of the body of Christ.

While we are already children of God,
adopted into God's family through baptism,
We still long to know deep in our hearts that we belong to God.
We long to be redeemed as the body of Christ,
to be whole.

The Spirit of God comes,
not to individuals,
but to the community of Christ.
We will know this wholeness
and sense of belonging
when we finally acknowledge our need for one another,
the truth that it is in community that we become whole.

El Espíritu de Dios también está transformando nosotros mismos,
la comunidad de Dios.

Nos está transformando a los hijos de Dios,
a un cuerpo transformado,
una comunidad unida,
donde todos sepan en su corazón y en su mente
que necesitamos el uno al otro para ser completo.

God is already acting in all of these things.
The Holy Spirit is already moving in creation
and in us.
We feel the pain of change within and around us,
even as we delight in the transformation we see.
But the text also speaks of the importance of our hope.
Paul calls on us to "hope for what we do not see,"
and "wait for it with patience."

This waiting is not a passive act.
We do not simply sit back and wait for God to transform the world.
Rather, the spirit opens us to God's movement within us
and within creation.
We are patient
and hopeful.

I want to return for a moment to the image of the laboring woman

and to a brief anatomy lesson.

The contractions of a woman's uterine muscle,
while painful,
serve a purpose.

First, they stretch

and thin

and widen

the opening at the bottom of the uterus,

allowing enough space for the baby's head and body to leave the womb.

Second, the contractions

help to move the baby down,

out from the womb

and into the welcome arms

of those who have longed for months

to see, touch and embrace her.

As humans, our first reaction to pain

is to tense our body's against it.

But,

in birth,

tensing against the pain of the contractions

hinders the body's birthing process.

The contractions are trying to open the womb

and move the baby down.

But when a woman fights against the pain,

labor actually becomes more painful and

she can prolong labor,

and delay the birth of her baby.

Labor is counterintuitive.

While our natural reaction is to tense and brace ourselves against pain,

the best thing to do

is to relax as much as possible,

breath,

and let the contractions do their job.

That is,

let the contractions help the baby to be born.

Nosotros tambien tenemos un rol en la transformacion

de la creacion y la comunidad de Dios.

El texto nos dice que nuestra paciencia y esperanza son muy importante.

Una mujer aliviandose,

Aunque es un proceso que esta ocurriendo a su cuerpo,

ella tambien tiene un rol muy importante.

Ella tiene que trabajar con los dolores que vienen durante el parto.

No pelear contra ellos,

pero dejelos venir,

relajando el cuerpo,

respirando.

Trabajando CON las contracciones

para que venga la querida bebe mas rapido.

The transformation within creation

and within ourselves

is happening continuously.

But we participate in this transformation,

this birth of
a new world
and a new self
through patient, hopeful waiting.
Transformation is happening and will continue to happen.
The Spirit will continue to reveal within community
a vision of God's transformed world.

This is the good news:
That the world is changing
because God's Spirit continues to move within creation
to bring about justice and wholeness.
God's Spirit continues to transform us and creation around us
into a united community,
where we are aware of our need for one another.
And when this transformation is painful,
-which it will be-
God's Spirit will continue to be with us,
comforting us,
and praying for us,
when we cannot
comfort and pray for ourselves.

Esta es la noticia buena,
el evangelio de Dios,
Que el Espiritu de Dios esta transformando la creacion
a un mundo mas justo para todos.
Que el Espiritu de Dios esta transformando nosotros mismos
y toda la comunidad de Dios
a una comunidad donde entendemos la necesidad el uno para el otro.
Y cuando esta transformacion
es dolorosa,
y va a ser dolorosa-
El Espiritu Santo estara con nosotros,
apoyandonos,
orando por nosotros,
cuando no podemos ni orar por nosotros mismos.

Amen