

Many of you already know that in 2008

I visited the Holy Land with 30 other women...

the trip was led by 3 Catholic nuns:

two of whom were scripture scholars who taught in seminary,

the other sister offered retreats to different groups on a regular basis.

The scholars: Sr. Mary Ann and Sr. Barbara not only taught scripture,

but they had lived and studied in the Holy Land with their students for months at a time.

They not only knew the history and the scripture and the

original Greek that the Scriptures were written in...

but they knew the local people: the shopkeepers and camel drivers.

So...in my estimation, they were reliable, believable and trustworthy guides.

They took us to the well of Jacob and to the ancient city of Jericho.

We went to the Mount of Beatitudes and to the site of Jesus' crucifixion...

these sights are pretty well verified to be the actual place where the events took place...

But interestingly, there are two major faith events

which draw huge crowds of faithful pilgrims...

but most scholars believe that their locations are totally inaccurate.

One is the "Via Delarosa"...the way of the cross.

What most pilgrims walk as the stations of the cross is just not correct....

Our retreat leaders led us on a different, quieter, historically accurate walk which reverberated with ancient energy...

The other one is 'the upper room' that is mentioned in Today's reading.

What today's pilgrims flock to see is basically just an empty upstairs room

Most, if not all, scholars say, that is not THE room....

We were advised that it was not worth our time or our money to wait in line to see the space...

Much of what Mark reports in our Gospel reading for today could be suspect...

did it really happen that way?

Was there a man in the city carrying a jar of water who was expecting them?

Was there a room all furnished and ready for their Passover meal?

Mark offers a picture of Jesus very much in control,

very aware of what was coming...

very in tune with the course of events even before they happened...

Did it all happen like that?

Well...most likely not!

So, why couldn't the evangelist just tell as it happened?

Those are vexing questions for *everyone*

who starts to take the Bible seriously....

and here is a short but accurate answer:

For the ancient peoples, their Scriptures were not meant to be historical nor scientific documents...

For the ancient peoples....these Scripture stories were stories of faith and meaning...

for the ancient peoples....what happened to Jesus was retold

in a way so that it would influence their lives

at that moment and in the future...

It wasn't so much a matter of what happened but of 'why' did it happen?

why is the story kept alive in that particular way...

**So why did Mark tell this story in this particular way
historically accurate or not?**

Well...

**one of the things that the evangelist who wrote the gospel of Mark \was trying to do was to
show his people the importance of being in community,
he wanted them to form a cohesive community with Jesus clearly as their leader because of
the hardships and suffering they were encountering...
he was concerned that it might derail their faith...**

**Now...we hear a lot these days,
that with all the social media available...
with everyone 'friending' everyone else on Facebook and Instagram...
with people 'tweeting' their favorite dinner
and/or their lonely Friday nights...
with the possibility of having thousands of 'friends' around the globe....
many people these days are actually very lonely
and feel as if they don't belong anywhere
even as they pretend to belong everywhere...**

Whatever the theological teachings of today's reading....

Whatever the ontological, eschatological teachings of today's reading...

Whatever the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of today's reading...

what I find most important in today's reading is not actually in the reading...

What I find so important and relevant

is that we actually have a Scripture story in the first place.

A story that helped a group of ancient people

stay together as a community of people

**even as they experienced--because of their faith—
severe trials and horrible persecutions**

**The ancient peoples knew the hardships of life were easier to bear
when you had friends and companions...**

**They knew that going it alone made life not only much lonelier,
and less joyful...but also a lot, lot harder...**

**They knew what Frank Sanders often tried to teach by using a quote
from the sitcom 'Cheers':**

**“Sometimes you wanna go where everybody knows your name
and they're always glad you came.”**

As many of you know, my Mom just passed over a little over 3 weeks ago...

My Dad passed over just about 20 months ago...

**During this time I, personally, have received so much love, so much support,
and so many kindnesses that I am absolutely convinced
of the importance of community...**

I'm convinced that we all need a place to go to

and a group of people around you

who can hold you when life is tough...

who can pick you up when you are feeling down....

who can even celebrate with you when life is good

So, on a personal note:

I would like to say 'thank you' to all of you for your love,

your prayers and your support

that have been offered to not only me, but also to my family, ...

The Center continues to be a place where everyone knows your name...

it continues to be a sanctuary where we all can find love,

support, peace and hope...

It continues to nourish our souls and our minds and bodies...

**It continues to speak to our deep, deep need of being in relationship
with nature, with each other, and with our God,**

**While our theological thoughts and reflection will change,
and our activities and programing will shift and morph...
what doesn't change is the love and respect that is offered to everyone
who walks onto these holy grounds...**

**The Center continues to do its best in order to remain
connected to the mission and vision of Jesus...**

**And it...we...continue to do our best to be a community that welcomes
all peoples who are looking for peace, hope and love...**

is the Center, are we, perfect?

Of course not...but It...we ...really do try our best to be a place

**“where everyone knows your name and
we truly are... always glad you came!”**

Amen...