***Faith at the Movies 2: Sister Act***

Scripture: Variety of Scriptures on Change

July 12, 2015

**SERMON SUMMARY**

Delores Van Cartier is a Diana Ross wannabe lounge singer whose career is sliding toward oblivion as *Sister Act* opens. She witnesses a murder ordered by her married lover, the owner of the casino where her cheesy Motown-style group performs. Delores goes to the police and is immediately sent into “witness protection” – in a convent of old-style nuns in full habit – as Delores says, “enguin-style.” The convent, church and the community are foundering in a sea of blight and decay, and the convent is seriously threatened, so they are struggling to “stay alive.” It is a parable for the church in our day and time.

**A Guide for Daily Reading and Meditation**

**A Prayer for Every Day:**  Lord, within your community we are strengthened to persevere, empowered to proclaim your truth, and shaped to wait on you. Teach us anew what we can learn from other faithful brothers and sisters who serve you in their particular ways of worship and proclamation. Amen.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Faith Themes**

* **God chooses the unlikely**. Like our hero from last week, Delores Van Cartier is one of the most unlikely messengers God has ever chosen. This time, the heroine is a threat to the ways in which the nuns of St. Katherine’s live and worship. It is exactly her the fact that she is an outsider with ideas and ways strange to the Order that gives her fresh insight into how the church will be revitalized.

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* **Transformation is possible when the people of God are willing to take a risk.** There are almost too many transformations in this story to mention in this brief study guide: the community, the church, the nuns, Mother Superior, and Delores, to name a few.

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* **Even the seemingly most committed of God’s people (disciples) may have hearts closed to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.** The Mother Superior, played so well by Maggie Smith, and several of the other nuns have grown rigid in their practice of ministry. In a telling scene, the Reverend Mother says that the nuns must be protected and the only protection they have is to be cloistered by the walls of the convent. She reacts very negatively to the inspired work of Sister Mary Clarence (well, sometimes it’s accidentally “inspired work”) and threatens to leave St. Katherine’s when it becomes clear that the new ways are speaking to a world that she has left behind.

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* **Each person is created in God’s image with gifts the “show others who God is” (1 Corinthians 12).** A young novice reaches out to Delores, trying to make her feel welcomed. As they talk, the young nun reveals to Delores that she often feels that she just has to be herself but she shows that she is very afraid to do that. Delores, herself obviously feeling constrained, has a knack for helping others live life to the fullest and brings out the young novice’s musical gift.

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* **Every person is a person of worth, and it is important to look beyond surface appearances.** This theme runs through this movie in many, many ways!

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* **The church is called to give people hope and deep joy.** The transformation of the choir changes the character of worship at St. Katherine’s. When the choir sings with hope and joy, celebrating God’s love in the words they sing as well as the attitudes – joyful, hopeful, spirit-filled – of the singers, everybody responds: the preaching changes, the community fills the place, the nuns smile, the acolytes boogie. The nuns literally tear down the fencing that shuts out the community and clean up the trash – as they begin building relationships with people in the neighborhood. It is an inspiring picture of hope and Beloved Community.

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* **No one is beyond God’s redeeming power – transformation is always possible.** The community, The Reverend Mother, Delores, even the neighborhood culture – grace abounds in this movie!

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**MONDAY**

Read the scriptures used on Sunday:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Ask yourself these questions:

* Where are you feeling led toward transformation in your life and spirit?
* Where is our congregation in need of transformation?
* Where do you see signs of new creation? In yourself? In our congregation? In our community/neighborhood?
* Make a list of ways in which our church is “salt” and another list of places we may have lost our “saltiness.” What do we need to do to shine – to get salty again?
* When have you felt that the power of the Holy Spirit has been evident in your life and the life of RUMC?

**TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY**

Beginning today, take two of the faith themes lifted up in the movie and meditate on where you meet those issues in your daily life.

Be sure to read all of the scriptures above as you meditate each day, and consult any notes you took as you viewed the film.

~ Rev. Vivian McCarthy, Pastor

Reisterstown UMC

July 12, 2015

1. From Claiborne, Shane, *et al,* *Common Prayer,* Copyright © 2010 by The Simple Way and School for Conversion. Zondervan [↑](#footnote-ref-1)