Columns
Spirituality



Mercy Sr. Jennifer Wilson and Jacob Mestizo, the student she sponsored through the RCIA process this year (Courtesy of Jennifer Wilson)



by Jennifer Wilson

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Several years ago, during Easter week, I walked into my middle school classroom and proclaimed, "Happy Easter!"

The students looked up and one loudly proclaimed, "Yo, Sister, catch up, that was yesterday!"

I said, "Well actually the season of Easter lasts for 50 days."

Another student said, "Sister, if you let me google it, I will prove to you that yesterday was Easter and today is Monday, plain old Monday not Easter."

Their skepticism and questions led me to explain to them that the Easter season lasts until Pentecost. There was no convincing these students that these days are a way of prolonging the joy of the actual day of Easter. I remember one student said, "Well, I still don't believe that Easter is more than yesterday."

Recalling that moment leads me to reflect on what I didn't tell them, that the Easter season is a time to remember and reflect on how the risen Christ is with us and everyone we connect with in everyday life.

Recently, I was listening to a Compass podcast, "All life is hope with Shane Claiborne." Shane is an activist and writer. I found the podcast to be meaningful and thought-provoking, so I printed out the transcript for later reflection.

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Shane says, "So I came to really see that the kingdom of God that Jesus talked about almost every time he opened his mouth was not just something we hope for when we die, but something we're to help usher in. We're to bring on earth as it is in heaven. So I'm excited about life after death. I believe in life before death, too. You know, and I believe we're not just in a holding pattern here waiting to die, but God's got a mission for us. And it's to transform the world."

I have followed Shane and his writings since I met him years ago while living in Philly. He does amazing work and advocates for peace and justice on many different levels.

I read through the podcast transcript and my first honest thoughts were, *OK, Shane, I am leaving the transforming to you because I don't have time and this world is a mess*. I sat there wallowing in my depressing thoughts as I thought about the violence in Haiti, the children and other people suffering in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, and the list went on and on.

I stopped all the thoughts and let silence come. As I sat in the silence, the word that kept coming back to me from his words was "transform." The Easter season is about transformation.

It was still easier for me to think about Shane and his message of transforming the world as too hard for one person. However, my life as a Sister of Mercy involves being aware of and working in some way to transform unjust systems. No one person can transform the world, but we can all do our part, no matter how bleak things seem.

I often say my favorite part of being a Sister of Mercy is that at any moment one of us is somewhere advocating and working with others to change something. This could be on a systemic level, or it could be on an individual level. Whatever the issue and wherever it is happening, Sisters of Mercy are helping to change and transform systems and people.

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This way of thinking about it changed my attitude about the bleakness of the world. I asked myself: How have I changed or transformed something or someone lately? I was surprised to find that I had many seemingly small moments that made a difference for someone and a difference for me.

One such moment was my reflection on a recent shopping trip with a college student who came into the church at the Easter Vigil. I was his sponsor and he needed clothes to wear for the vigil. He was an inexperienced shopper and after he tried to buy suit pants that cost $200 dollars, I patiently explained how prices work and that you cannot just choose anything. The next obstacle was the size of the pants.

I realized this was not going to be a quick trip and I sighed to myself because, of course, I had a lot of other things I thought I needed to be doing. I then embraced the moment and we laughed and teased and eventually bought an outfit.

On that day I showed up, I provided mentorship and help to a student. I helped in his journey to transformation and I was also changed by the encounter. I remembered to slow down, to enjoy the moment I was in, to really be with him and not in the to-do list in my head.

The student who insisted that Easter is only one day comes back to mind as I reflect on what that would mean and what we would miss. We would miss the opportunity, especially during this Easter season, to transform and be transformed in many little ways throughout our days.

Easter is about transformation. The world needs it, and we need it. Showing up for each other transforms us and others.

What are the small ways you helped in a transformation and were transformed yourself? Every small encounter, while it might not seem like it, does make the world a better place. That for me, is the hope of the Easter season.