

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

DO YOU SEE THE STUMP AND THE SHOOT?

It is said that a tree's age can be determined by counting the rings of growth in its trunk.

Beginning with the center and working outward, one need only count the dark colored rings to get a sense of the many seasons it has weathered. Many of the striking redwood trees in California, for example, with a girth as wide as 18 feet, are over 2,000 years old. So too when we consider the Stump of Jesse, we are contemplating a history that spans generations. For the early Christians, this image would have been indicative of Jesus's lineage to King David and would have been referenced as a sign that he truly was the Messiah that had been promised. For us too, the Stump of Jesse can be an invitation to reflect on our own lineage — not only as it refers to our families and life of discipleship, but also, our work for justice and our work in Catholic health care.

Sixty-five years ago today, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. This act of civil disobedience ignited a year-long struggle to integrate the public bus system and a decades-long struggle for racial justice that continues today. As the idiom goes, in so many areas of discipleship, we, without question, “stand on the shoulders of giants.” Indeed, Ms. Parks is one such giant whose determination and fearlessness continues to spark action in us today.



The work of the women religious who established the Catholic health ministry in the United States is also not to be underestimated. Their care and compassion for the most sick and vulnerable continue to serve as touchpoints for us in our own ministry: we need not look far to continue to see their influence on our work.

Finally, today's reading from the prophet Isaiah reminds us that the shoot that sprouts from the Stump of Jesse, will embody a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and strength. Jesus, as the fulfillment of the prophecy, manifests this not only over the course of his life, but the work continues through our own discipleship. The care, compassion and tenderness with which we aim to treat those in our midst — especially those who are different from us — is the result of a long history of those who came before. Indeed, “as water covers the sea,” the leadership of Jesus allows for all the earth to know God.

How does your specific work allow for all the earth to know God? In what other ways might our lineage continue to inform our future lives of discipleship?

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