

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C
2 Maccabees 7: 1-2, 9-14
Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15
2 Thessalonians 2: 16 – 3: 5
Luke 20: 27-38
Rev. Charles B. Gordon, C.S.C.
The Garaventa Center
University of Portland

Imagine that you are a dancer in an internationally acclaimed ballet company. (If I can imagine it, I'm sure you can.) The company is in the last stages of preparation for their first public performance of a wonderfully elaborate and spectacular ballet in the classical tradition. Unfortunately, artistic temperaments being what they are, a terrible dispute has broken out in the company, and the artistic director has been locked out of the theater. The company has determined that they will carry on without him.

You are rehearsing the climactic scene of the ballet. It's a riveting spectacle. All of the scenery is in place. The dancers are in costume. The orchestra is in full cry. Virtually the entire company is on stage at once. Hordes of Cossacks are sword-dancing, swans are dying, and the princess and her retinue are flying back and forth across the stage in search of her prince, whom a witch has turned into a particularly acrobatic and elusive frog.

Like the rest of the company, you've been giving the performance everything you've got, but it has gradually become clear to you that it isn't working. Something is askew. The whole effect is wrong. Even with all the concentration and effort and good will in the world, without the director, the dancers just can't make the thing work. This is upsetting, because everyone is desperately anxious that the ballet should succeed.

Suddenly, over the din of the performance, you hear someone banging on the stage door. Somehow you know it's the director. You try to make eye-contact with the dancers around you. Most of them either haven't heard the knocking, or have chosen to ignore it. But a few *have* heard, and it's clear that they have reached the same conclusion that you have. Someone has to get to the stage door as quickly as possible, and let the director back in. Only he can put the performance right, and save the company from dismal failure.

Unfortunately, the door upon which the director is knocking is stage right. You and your like-minded colleagues are stage left. The only way you can get to the door is by crossing the huge stage while the performance is in progress. This is a dangerous prospect, because the crowded stage is heaving with frenetic activity. As soon as you get out of step, and try to cross, you are likely to be kicked by a swan, slashed by a Cossack, or even landed upon by the prince.

But, undaunted, you and your accomplices set out for the door, taking your lumps along the way. Some of the most painful collisions occur when, in the chaos, you and your allies are thrown against one another. There are moments when you wish you had ignored the knocking and stayed in step, but with patient endurance you manage to reach the door and open it. The director enters, the ballet is put right, and the company is saved.

The life of faith, as described in our scripture readings, is something like the story I've just told. The prophet Malachi, and our Responsorial Psalm assure us that the Lord is coming with justice to rule the earth. The sun of justice with its healing rays is about to restore broken creation. St. Paul teaches us that we must *participate* in the onset of

God's justice. Rather than live lives of disorder, we must conform ourselves to the Kingdom that is dawning.

Our Gospel warns us that if we dance to the melodious song of the Kingdom, we will get out of step with the world. And if we get out of step with the world, we are likely to get hurt. But if we carry on with patient endurance, things will come right in the end. Our redemption is near at hand.