

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle A

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Recently I had an “Ahh Hah” moment, one of those insight moments that seemingly come out of nowhere. I listened to a speech by Scillia Elworthy who has been a peace advocate and negotiator for the past 50 years, talk on what to do with violence in the world. She asks the question over and over - How do we deal with extreme violence without using force? How do we deal with the bully without becoming a thug ourselves? There have been many others talks on this subject in our recent past but it was obvious Ms Elworthy was an example of the human heart’s sincere struggle with bringing the Kingdom of God to this place at this time. She was a witness to how Jesus taught us to live in very real, very focused, and very concrete terms. How do we take the lesson to “turn the other cheek” and make it work, make a difference with that behavior in the world? Her experience tells her and us that using force against violence rarely if ever works. And then summarizes what does work in her experience. She says the change needs to take place in the heart to be effective against violence. Inner power through self-knowledge of one’s own strengths and weaknesses is key. One needs meditation to get there. Secondly, one needs to be calm, and have clarity, but mostly lack of fear. In a real way one needs to practice mastery of fear. Lastly anger, our anger, needs to be controlled. Spread out it is like gasoline that can be a conflagration with the smallest spark, but contained as in an engine, it can move us along. In less than 16 minutes of relating 50 years of learning, she relays her rediscovery of what Jesus came to tell us - namely, that to be successful in all our relationships, we need to be humble. If we want to further relationships, especially oppressive and violent ones, we need to be humble. We need to listen to the other side’s position and then with clarity state our own. Not with hatred or force, but with simple conviction. I watched it several times because it was so simple and concise. Even her examples of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Suu Kyi in Burma and Army LC Chris Hughes in Afghanistan were uplifting and hopeful.

Overall it was rather an affirming moment that even in today’s world with today’s tensions, hatreds, and violence in every corner of the world, Jesus’ simple words and teachings are rediscovered to be true by people who seek the Truth. It gave me the insight that Jesus came to be our savior by leading us in right paths. All we need to do is be diligent seekers and practice – practice his lessons, figure out how his lessons work in our lives and then practice some more. So you may be saying that this is a good lesson, but what does it have to do with what we hear from the readings today? The first reading from Zechariah’s Messianic prophecies and specifically the beginnings of apocalyptic literature, we hear the drumbeat of the “Day of the Lord”. We hear the beginnings of distant rumblings of the “Kingdom of God”, of the “Kingdom to Come”. Verse nine begins the now familiar “pessimism about the present, but optimism for the future based on the expectation of an ultimate divine victory and the subsequent transformation of the cosmos”. Even in Psalm 145 we hear God is powerful, but not indiscriminate with His creation. He may have the power to drive all things to “good”, but He does not, He knows how to “ask” instead of “make” those who revere Him. He offers all humankind the choice to collaborate or not, all we need to do is bow our stiff necks once in a while, be humble. In the end, God’s will is powerful enough to be victorious. Another talk I heard was from a lesser known modern day singer, [Amanda Palmer](#), on her discovery of the beauty and power of asking genuinely, face to face, eye to eye, even to strangers. It literally moves the world and all of its outmoded oppressions and fears aside. Another genuine humble heart seeking the truth, seeking how to put Jesus’ lessons about the Father to work in today’s world.

Paul’s letter to the Roman takes up the theme as well. We do not need to climb the Tibetan mountains to find the guru, we do not need to walk the deserts to find the “reed swaying in the wind”, we do not need to jump from one self-help program to another and another. We need to only look inward because we were given the Spirit and that Spirit animates us, give us life, makes us more than the knee jerk damaged, unbridled and uncontrollable emotions our physical selves challenge us with. The Spirit

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gives us Its gifts – wisdom, understanding, counsel or right judgment, fortitude, knowledge, piety or reverence, fear or wonder of the Lord. All the tools for us to understand the will of the Father and bring His will into our time and our place, to bring His kingdom to our reality.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we hear how we should move forward with the Spirit in us. Jesus states He has this infinitely wonderful connectedness with the Father that is so profound that it is a very sharing of the essence of God-ness. But even here Jesus says it does not make Him coercive or violent or a bully about it. He knows who He is and stays true to form in offering insight, knowledge and understanding of the Father. The most powerful entity to walk the face of the Earth – God - says point blank, it is not about power or might, but about meekness and humbleness of heart. The rest of the challenge can be met with the gifts of the Spirit to overcome our weaknesses. We don't say, "Oh, that is too hard, and walk away". We are believers, we gather our genuineness of searching for the Truth and then figure out how to proceed and meet the chaos, the bullies, the violence in our lives and push them back so we have the peace and calm of the Kingdom to Come – not only for ourselves, but for the glory of the Father whose will it – namely for all mankind to live with Him in peace. If every believer whether formally Baptized or not, works on the instances of corrupted creation they come across each day, week, month or year, then the Kingdom is near, as Jesus once said. That is why we search our hearts for the clarity, for the self-knowledge, for the courage the spirit placed there. Then we can be humble and make a difference in the ongoing battle with injustice, hatred, anger, abuse, violence and death. Humbleness will bring love into this life.

I was invigorated by these readings today, because Jesus' burden of transforming creation into a gift to the Father, has a solution, it has a road map, it has the tools to make it reality. If everyone takes up their little piece, the tasks will be light and easy. Jesus and His Church will be successful.