

Trust in the Way of God

This past week the 1st readings at daily mass have been from Genesis. These are marvelous readings from the first story of creation (which is actually the younger of the two). A story written and edited by the Jews while in exile in Babylon. They were trying to make sense of what had happened to them; what caused this exile. The gist of the story--God created all in harmony, and Adam and Eve would decide to follow their own way which led to chaos. Israel too, instead of following God did it their own way which led to their conquest and exile.

The concept of Original Sin seems to have gotten somewhat distorted over time. It's not necessarily a thing that gets passed into our genes. We tend to say babies are born with sin. Original Sin means that attitude of not trusting in the way of God, but wanting to do it our own way. It was not the act itself, but the attitude per se. We are born into a world of this attitude which then we tend to make our own. This is what Israel would wrestle with this all their history.

The prophets would call out to the people again and again, calling them back to God; to trust in God's ways. God's way of living in harmony as summarized in the 10 commandments. Basically keep the way of God first, treat everybody with respect and dignity.

Jeremiah the prophet is probably one of the last prophets right before the exile. He reminded the people, and the king, to follow the way of God, trust in God. They would not listen. In this passage we can hear foreshadowing of Jesus' beatitudes in his words. Ultimately, as we know, Israel will seek to follow their own way, using violence and politics to try to resist Babylon. It fails. The city and temple will be destroyed as a response. The professionals, the royalty will be exported, forced to immigrate to Babylon in exile. They will remain there as immigrants for several generations; until they are called home.

The Beatitudes are powerful, subtle, poetic reminders of this call to harmony. They are a prophetic call to us from Jesus; trust in God.

Luke's versions are especially poignant because they directly point to people who have realized that the ways of ego, power politics, greed the

ways of humankind have let them down; the way of humans have led them to poverty, to hunger, to desolation. They become blessed not because they endure these sins, but because it will cause them to see the Wisdom and Harmony of God, and the folly of any other way. Those who do not see this will face the woes.

Jesus in his ministry will refine, restate and reveal God's ways which bring harmony.

It will be respect for the dignity of others; mercy, compassion, generosity; that willingness to give of self. Jesus will heal all persons, regardless of being Jew or Gentile. Jesus brings the focus onto the person, not the cruelty of the law as imposed by narrow minded persons.

It comes down to Love, that Agape, that sense of goodness in the other. Jesus' lived this. And of course those in power tried to stop him, they killed him.

He was blessed. He was raised from the dead.

This week was also an amazing week in other ways. Pope Francis wrote to the Bishops of the United States in response to the treatment of immigrants in our country. He wrote (n3) *"...Jesus Christ, loving everyone with a universal love, educates us in the permanent recognition of the dignity of every human being, without exception...that the most decisive value possessed by the human person surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that be made to regulate life.."*

God's way is one of respecting the dignity of all; and working amid the laws to respect that dignity in any country.

Think too about our personal conflicts, our own resentments, our own fears. Where do they arise from? Our own egos, our own uncontrolled desires, our needs, the fear that we won't have enough, or others want what I have.

These are real. Yet, how can we approach and resolve them? We could continue as we do and try to make laws that force people to do things;

demonize who groups of people to reassure ourselves; tell lies about people.

Or

We can act with humility, kindness, mercy, compassion; letting go of the need to win, and accepting there can be a different kind of victory. Begin to see there is more than enough, if people would let go of their super wealth. It can also be in our own personal conflicts with each other, changing our tone; seeing the brokenness in ourselves and the other; seeking peace, seeking bridges.

It means trust in the Way of God, in the Way of Jesus Christ.

We will be blessed, and so will the world, as we do.