

Pastoral Reflection

August 29, 2021

“Bring forth the city of God...
bring forth the city of mercy...bring forth the city of peace...bring forth the city of justice...
bring forth the city of God.”

As I prayed the closing song with all of you at St. Cronan’s last week, I began to articulate the tensions I feel as I prepare this reflection.

In the first reading Moses calls Israel to observe God’s statutes so they may “enter in and take possession of the land” God gave their ancestors. My mind and heart goes to the people of Afghanistan who must leave their homeland and those unable to leave when their homeland is taken from them. Like many of you, I ache when I hear about those families facing death because they acted in what they thought would save their homeland and their people. I cry out, “where is God?” knowing that God is not the source nor cause of this crisis. My country is. And I am a part of what is being done because it is my country.

The Gospel reminds me of so many people choosing to remain unvaccinated. The Pharisees, as Mark portrays them, were fixated on externals and self-absorbed in their own view of righteousness. How many people have I heard say they would not get vaccinated because it was a violation of their freedom and it was their body, so no one could tell them they had to get the shot. They expressed no concern about their children, other family members, or the greater community. They failed to recognize that a global pandemic affects all of us, and all of us must work to control the virus or suffer continued deaths here and around the globe. This self-absorption is so far from the radical kinship to which God calls us – radical kinship with all people and with the rest of creation.

The book of Genesis tells us, “God created humankind in God’s own image.” This calls us to reflect on who God is. Then we can begin to understand who we are. Steven Bevans, SVD, in a recent presentation on the Triune God reminds us that “God is what God does.” Bevans said:

What this means is that, as we see God at work in Jesus, inspired by the Spirit, we get an understanding of who God is in God’s deepest reality—working to realize the divine dream of “radical kinship” among all peoples, and with the whole of creation. This working for community reveals the secret of what God is in God’s self: a community, a relationship of radical equality, dialogue, and sharing...that will realize God’s dream for creation. How God works in the world for “radical kinship,” through Jesus of Nazareth, through the Holy Spirit, is...God in Godself being community of radical equality and diversity in unity. God is what God does: “At the heart of holy mystery is not monarchy but communion; not absolute rule, but threefold *koinonia*.” (Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, 216) Trinity is the mystery of Love Giving Everything, calling us to do the same with one another.

The two examples I mentioned in the beginning of this reflection challenge me/us to see as God sees, to love as God loves. The gift of compassion is union with God’s compassion. Can I, can we, love as God loves? Because of the Triune God we respond together, communally, in deep relationship with one another and God to live radical kinship and to

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