

## Pastoral Reflection

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”

Last week’s reading from the Book of Revelation reiterated God’s covenant revealed in the Book of Jeremiah, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:31-33). The author of Revelation expresses this overwhelming love of God in the words: “Behold. God’s dwelling is with the human race. God will dwell with them and they will be God’s people and God will always be with them...” Likewise, Jesus tell his disciples that those who keep his word shall have God dwelling with them. He further promises them peace and the coming of the Spirit, the Advocate, who will teach them everything and remind them of all that Jesus told them.

Often I feel dissonance when I hear Christ’s promise of peace. The amount of violence among us – wars, trafficking, poverty, gun availability and use, rejection of particular groups of people, complacent or willful destruction of the earth’s resources, and many other situations – causes me discomfort when I consider how peaceful my life is compared to the lives of so many others. I am grateful...and recommit myself to do what I can to bring Christ’s peace to our world.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us that the early Christian community struggled with difficult decisions and efforts to welcome all people into the community. They too struggled with crises that could have destroyed the fledgling Jesus movement. They too needed to reflect on how they were called to enact the Word of God in their world. Today’s reading describes a group trying to impose the Mosaic practices on the community in spite of the Gospel being preached by Paul and Barnabas. This sounds very familiar to us 2000 years later. We too can get caught in rules and practices that someone else imposes or that we think are essential for being Christian our way. We may even do this to one another in the name of the Gospel.

I find that I need a reminder now and then to get centered in the belief and hope that God dwells among us and calls me to new life – again and again and again. At those times I find this prayer by Walter Brueggemann challenges me and brings me into new life in Christ Jesus.

Let Us Pray...

For those of us too much into obedience, birth us to the freedom of the gospel.  
For those of us too much into self-indulgence, birth us to discipleship in your ministry.  
For those too much into cynicism, birth us to the innocence of the Christ child.  
For those of us too much into cowardice, birth us to the courage to stand before principalities and powers.  
For those of us too much into guilt, birth us into forgiveness worked in your generosity.  
For those of us too much into despair, birth us into the promises you make to your people.  
For those of us too much into control, birth us into the vulnerability of the cross.  
For those of us too much into victimization, birth us into the power of Easter.  
For those of us too much into fatigue, birth us into the energy of Pentecost.

We dare pray that you will do for us and among us and through us what is needful for newness. Give us the power to be receptive, to take the newness you give, to move from womb warmth to real life.

*Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann.* Fortress Press, 2003

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