

Pastoral Reflection
The Feast of the Most Holy Trinity

The Holy Spirit, gift of the Risen Jesus, conveys divine life to us and thus lets us enter into the dynamism of the Trinity, which is a dynamism of love, of communion, of mutual service, of sharing. A person who loves others for the very joy of love is a reflection of the Trinity. A family in which each person loves and helps one another is a reflection of the Trinity. A parish in which each person loves and shares spiritual and material effects is a reflection of the Trinity. (Pope Francis, Reflections on the Trinity, 2014)

God is love, which is embodied by Jesus in his presence and teachings, and enkindled in us by the Holy Spirit, who “proceeds” from the relationship between God and Christ. That relationship among the persons of the Trinity is our covenant, our birthright, our charge. We bring this love to every relationship we encounter. We embrace this love in everyone we meet. We proclaim this love to our community, our city, our state, our nation, our world.

And yet, where is this love? As I review all of the headlines in the past weeks: the gun violence that besieges our children; the monstrous attack on our democratic ideals from Jan 6; the wars and unrest in our world that create so many refugees and immigrants. Where does the violence end? Where does the love begin and flourish? How do we take the fire of love that the Holy Spirit has enkindled in our hearts and overcome the hate we see and experience? How do we support our brothers and sisters who experience this hate first-hand every day, even at the hands of so-called Christians?

This week, the USCCB Bishop for the sub-committee of African American Affairs, Bishop Joseph Perry, recalled the 7-year anniversary of the shooting at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Those gathered there for bible study were looking at the Parable of the Sower of the Seed. Bishop Perry urges us to reflect on that parable this month, and especially on Juneteenth, and to consider the condition of our “soil.” Perhaps we need to consider God’s love the seed. It may be as small as a mustard seed when compared to the many hate-filled actions we see in our world. However, that may be all it will take to change the tide of hatred in our country. Like many of you, I have relatives who consider me a “bleeding-heart liberal,” and who promote the selfish nationalism so ingrained in our world today. I often find myself talking with these relatives less and less – avoiding the derision and arguments that invariably ensue. Perhaps I need to take that mustard seed of love and let its spark shine even with my own relatives, not to start stressful conversations, but to gently engage them with Christ’s love. If we see the love of Christ in those we disagree with, perhaps we can start the glimmer of hope and love in all those who find hate and distrust in their hearts.

“Lord, grant me patience and I want it NOW!” The love of God, embodied by Jesus and shared by the Holy Spirit can’t be spread fast enough for me, but we must find ways to start with ourselves, in the now, and trust that the Trinity will triumph, as is promised. So let’s walk for an end to gun violence, vigil for our Black Lives Matter ideals, support refugees and immigrants and welcome all into our midst.

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