

I was telling a friend of mine that I would be reflecting with you on our Gospel Reading this weekend, and she said, "Maureen, that's a very confusing gospel" - and she was oh, so right! Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "You who have found your life will lose it, and you who lose your life for my sake will find it." Aren't we taught to follow our dreams, to think big, to make a difference and set the world on fire?!? And didn't Jesus tell us to let our light shine? Here's Matthew quoting Jesus as telling us now to be something different - maybe that's not really a conflict to be small, to be less - at least not always. As I tried to figure out what Jesus was saying, I looked to Amy Welborn, a spiritual writer for Living Faith, and she pointed out how she looked at her life and made sure that as she looked ahead - she tried to think about the gifts God had given her and looked to Jesus' words and his example of humility being at the core of all she does. Actually, Jesus is stressing the greatest commandment of all - to love God above all things - in all those little acts of love we hopefully do every day - calling a loved one or friend who may be lonely; listening to someone who thinks differently from me (remember the Chinese proverb - "The mind is like a parachute - it only works when it's open.") Openness is the secret! This openness leads us to think of the "other."

Speaking of the "other" - Peter Nixon writes regularly for the monthly booklet GIVE US THIS DAY. He estimates just in 2020 there are roughly upwards of 70 million people around the world who've been forced to leave their homes due to poverty, threats of violence, and other catastrophies. Can we wrap our minds around this? - 70 million people in one year. We know our Congolese sisters and brothers can speak to us about this!

A defining mark of the Pontificate of Pope Francis was in St. Peter's Square last fall where a life-size sculpture of migrants and refugees was unveiled. To quote Pope Francis: "We cannot remain insensitive, our hearts deadened, before the misery of so many innocent people." Here in our country this past month, we've seen the ultimate violence of what was done to George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks and the countless others before them - some known and many others - not so! For me, to see a 75-year old protestor in Buffalo who was pushed to the ground and the total indifference of the police passing him by while he lay flat on the ground bleeding from his head - was absolutely unconscionable to me! How do we take Pope Francis' words to heart? Here at All Saints we have heard outrage in our homilies about what Pope Francis is talking about. We've heard homily after homily and in our weekly Newsletters on social justice issues and certainly have had our consciousness raised regarding these issues. Yet, in the midst of all this violence and the fear of the Covid 19 Pandemic - there still is hope and joy that surfaces.

For example, this is a very joyful weekend at All Saints. I'd like to share with you about our five Adult Initiation Candidates who we welcome into the fullness of the Church Universal this weekend when they received the Sacrament of Confirmation and if that wasn't enough, we are also celebrating our 2020 High School Graduates from our parish - both are significant milestones in the their lives.

I'd first like to first recognize our Candidates who normally would have been welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil and had to wait until now to be received. They have been meeting weekly on Sunday mornings since the fall and were more than ready to become full members of the Universal Church and of our local church of All Saints. So let us welcome Ian Brennan, Alec DelGigante, Jessamyn Magri, Christian Kasimba, from our Congolese Community, and Andrea Stone into our church community of All Saints parish.

Now to acknowledge our 23 High School Graduates. Let us not forget what it's been like for our Graduates who were born after the dawn of a new Millennium. Our Graduates have lived through school shootings, the ugliness of racism, and now graduating during this Pandemic – virtually without their friends, classmates and teachers close by - not to mention their social lives, sports, dances and Graduation Ceremonies – and the list goes on. One high school grad was quoted as saying: “As we go forward in life, whether we're heading to a Trade School, College or simply wherever the wind takes us – do so with an open mind and a full heart.” Michelle Obama, when talking to Graduates told them, “Please know that your story matters, your ideas matter, your vision for what our world can be and should be – MATTERS.” We here at All Saints send you forth with our love and prayers – we are so proud of our All Saints Graduates! And by the grace of God living within each one of you – that you won't ever be afraid to let your light shine and make a difference in this world– that is the challenge your All Saints Community sends you forth with. Congratulations!