

Good Friday
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Good Friday Reflection

I read this story in a Lenten reflection by the author Judy Cannota....

A Professor was well known for giving elaborate object lessons to his students. One day when the students walked into his classroom they discovered a large target on the wall. Nearby on a table lay a collection of darts.

Dr. Smith told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or who made them very angry and he would allow them to throw darts at the person's picture.

The students got right into the spirit of it... one drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend - another made a sketch of a family member. Others went along with it and soon the class was filled with laughter as they propelled darts at the pictures they had drawn.

Some of the students threw the darts with such force that their targets ripped apart.

After some minutes Dr. Smith asked them to stop - a hush fell over the classroom as he began removing the target from the wall. Underneath the mangled shreds was a picture of Jesus...

It was then Dr. Smith read from the Gospel of Matthew:

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for the least of my sisters and brothers,
you did to Me."

There is some very important theology in this experience the students had -
truth about God and truth about us!

There are 2 points I would like to reflect on:

The truth in that story was not new - before the Professor, a wonderful man named Irenaeus, an early Bishop in the Church - taught that *everything in creation flowed from and contains the very substance of God!*

Jesus himself said: I am in the Father and you are in Me and I am in you!

We have lost that truth along the way... We think we are separate and independent of others... but we aren't. God does dwell within all of creation - and within each of us.

All that we have listened to in the Gospels over and over again - tells us that God, in the Person of Jesus - reveals the eternal desire - for humanity and divinity to be united -
Before Jesus - no one got that.

But Jesus reveals what that means in his daily life with others.... how He was united to the lepers - to the poor - to women - to children --- differently from how people understood or lived together in that time. Many understood and followed him - hungry to learn more...

Others understood what he was asking and turned away - it was too much - too dangerous - they would lose what they thought they had!

But understanding Jesus - meant understanding God - in such a new way! It meant loving as God loves - allowing that knowledge to lead us in our daily life and relationships! No darts!

You see - when we don't understand or accept that truth of unity with God and others - we see ourselves separate of others.... the danger is that from our personal limited experiences of life, we make judgments about others.... which means - we see ourselves as superior to others

When we are superior - we are right - and those who don't agree with us - those who infringe upon us - they are wrong - therefore - become inferior to us.... that is what led to all the anger those students felt and displayed with the darts. That is what is going on - all over the world today.

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In her book *Wisdom Jesus*, Cynthia Bourgeault explains that the good - the tender spirits within us look at what we are doing to one another and ask: "What can I do to stop the darkness that drives us apart - that drives us to see the other as bad - Cynthia's response was that by judging the darkness, we only make it worse... to try to stop one way and make it all go the other way - means *we are saying we can accept **this** and that we are rejecting **that!***

This actually empowers the cycle of polarization that creates the problem in the 1st place. The resolution doesn't lie in collapsing the tension by canceling one of them out...

Something has to go deeper, something that can hold the both of them!

That is why Jesus was silent before Pilate - that is why Jesus stood there holding within himself the anguish of Judas - the cowardice of Peter - the sanctimony of the Pharisees - there in the midst of all the blackness - - - not judging - not fixing, just letting it BE in Love!

Jesus was allowing Love to go deeper - pressing down to where the deepest level - where opposites arise - - and He was holding THAT to light!

An example of this struck me: A Jewish family had a son ready to go to school, but he refused! No matter what they said - or what great school supplies they bought for him - or tell him of the friends he would know there - He just steadfastly refused and put up such a fuss, they didn't know what to do. When they forced him to go to school, he had to be sent home because he would not settle down. Totally frustrated, the parents took him to the Rabbi - explaining the situations and asked if he would talk to the boy....

The Rabbi smiled and beckoned the boy to him - pulled him onto his lap - put his arms around him and held him tight - in silence! After a time had passed, the boy shifted and looked up at the Rabbi and smiled.... The Rabbi asked if he was ready to try school...the boy smiled and shook his head "Yes..."

The Rabbi's love held the darkness and fear - and it was absorbed in the strength of light and love.

I admit, I don't know how to do that in our many, many situations today. I know war isn't the answer - and the people must speak out to change the pain and suffering for others. Is it perhaps in the conscious way we come together?

Does it help to pray in words - not condemning, but standing up to Evil as Jesus in the Temple?
But with a heart willing to embrace and absorb the Evil with Love and Peace - while caring
about the humans themselves?

That is what Jesus was doing throughout the Passion - for people of all time! Absorbing the
darkness that comes into each of our lives. God - Jesus - went to the darkest of places - to the
kinds of hell we can experience. His depth of love will hold us in our darkness and carry us
through!

Cynthia quoted a poem written by an anonymous English nun that sums this up so beautifully...
*In stillness nailed - to hold all time, all change, all circumstances
in and to Love's embrace!*

God's love is so personal and so intimate for each one of us! In living out his humanity, Jesus
accepted all the experiences humans face -

There is no rejection - no abandonment - no poverty - no torture or death
we face that Jesus hasn't personally experienced!

There is no hell on earth where we are absolutely alone - no indignities - no vulnerability
that isolates us ----

And it is not just that Jesus experienced it 2000 years ago.... God dwells within each of us..
feels it as we do - faces it with us.

13 years ago my brother, Bill died of a very difficult cancer. I was alone with him the last two
hours.... Bill and I were very close and my heart was breaking as I sat with him. But somehow
and I cannot explain how - but I knew that since there is no clock time outside of this life -
Jesus on the Cross and Bill on his - were One! Bill was held in Love greater than the cancer.

I knew *that union* was within him and it gave me comfort! My Bill was not alone in this!

So when you come to reverence the Cross - think of the worst experience or worst fear
you have - the deepest anger - or the heartache you carry -

and know that Jesus - God - totally understands and lives within it - in you... and
you never, ever will be alone!