

April 14, 2017
Good Friday

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Good Friday – 2017

On Palm Sunday we reflected on the two processions that entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday in the Spring of 30AD:

Coming from the West, the imperial procession of Pilate – embodying all the power and glory and violence of the Empire that rule the world.

Coming from the East, the peasant procession, the people’s procession – Jesus on a donkey, an alternative, anti-imperial, nonviolent procession, seeping with the justice and love of God for all persons. Jesus – cheered by his followers: the poor, the widows, the lepers, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the foreigners, the women and children.

Last evening, we reflected on the Last Supper of Jesus, Bread of Life – to become bread for others in loving service. Today we reflect on where Jesus on that donkey ultimately landed: on the cross at Calvary. Today’s passion story from John’s Gospel reveals that Jesus was murdered, state execution, the death penalty; because of his dream to birth the world that God intended. His *passion for the reign of God, the realm of God, the kingdom of God on earth as in heaven*, led to his *passion and execution*.

Today’s passion story in a vivid way reveals Jesus refusing to respond to violence with violence – thus breaking the cycle of violence that has plagued humanity since Cain’s slaying of his brother Abel in the Book of Genesis. Unfortunately, Christianity – for the last 1700 years – has by-and-large neglected this core teaching.

Yesterday’s dropping of the largest non-nuclear bomb in US history – nicknamed “the mother of all bombs” – by a country that still considers itself predominantly Christian, symbolizes our outright rejection of Jesus’ core teaching.

Sisters and brothers, when all is said and done, with which procession are we involved?

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I would like to reflect for a few minutes on Jesus’ vision for peace: in our hearts, our families, our church and world.

If we believe that life has no ultimate meaning: that the world will always be in chaos and that we get ahead of others by whatever means necessary – then we will self destruct along with the world in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But, if we believe life has a purpose: that the Creator is a God of peace and that we are called to plumb its depths, then our life and contribution to humanity take on a peaceful meaning.

If we want to live in peace with all humanity, we have to see with the eyes of peace. Then we will begin to envision what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “beloved community,” what Jesus called “the reign of God.”

A life of peace begins with the simplest and most basic truth: we are all equal. *Every human being is equal to every other human being.* We are all sisters and brothers, all children of the God of peace. All life is sacred. This vision is fundamental reality – everything we say or do comes from this vision.

If we kill other human beings – we destroy our very sisters and brothers. Once we truly realize the essential unity of all life – we can never hurt or kill another human being, much less wage war, build nuclear weapons or drop the “mother of all bombs” or allow millions to starve to death each year.

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Sisters and brothers, once we grasp Jesus’ vision for peace – which, by the way, is at the heart of all the major world religions – scales fall from our eyes, weapons fall from our hands, harsh words ceased to come from our lips and suddenly the great truth, hidden since the Creation of the world, is revealed: we are already reconciled to one another and to God – *we are already one!*

With Jesus Christ’s vision of peace, we are transformed forever – from that moment forward we can reach out to befriend everyone, we see every human being on earth – especially the suffering, the ostracized, the poor, the enemy – as our sister or brother.

Although this *vision* is easy to accept if we but open our eyes to the sanctity of life and equality of the human family; *living it out* for the rest of our lives is more difficult... for our culture will insist that we are ‘blind,’ centuries of war and violence have convinced us that some – but not *all* – are equal and thus, some can be legally disposed of. The culture will assert who can live and who can die.

If we insist on the truth of Christ’s vision of nonviolent love and human equality, we will live it out, *even* in the face of cultural opposition. From now on this vision will tell us that *everyone gets to live.*

Sisters and brothers, on this Good Friday 2017, let us pray for the grace and the courage to go forward with works of peace, contributing to the world’s nonviolent transformation, *despite* the cultural blindness and its insistence that human life can be taken. *Let us* never again condone violence; *let us* choose the life of peace.

Amen!