

For Sunday, August 13, 2017

Life with Conflicting Opposites

20th Sunday of Ordinary Time

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/082017.cfm>

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Matthew 15:21-28

Richard Rohr [recently wrote](#): “Jesus was killed on the collision of cross-purposes, conflicting interests, and half-truths. The cross was the price Jesus paid for living in a ‘mixed’ world that was both human and divine, simultaneously broken and utterly whole. He hung between a good thief and a bad thief, between heaven and earth, inside of both humanity and divinity, a male body with a feminine soul, utterly whole and yet utterly disfigured—all the primary opposites.” One of the graced blessings of Christianity is learning how to develop and sharpen the gift of discernment in the face of opposites. As believers we are asked to internalize the Gospel message, allowing it to enlighten our minds and inform our actions.



A simple authentic and honest encounter with another human being can reveal hidden truths, allow enemies to embrace, and mutual respect to flourish. It is necessary to journey into the heart of a person in order for walls, prejudices, and antiquated barriers to be removed. Inclusivity has been one of the hallmarks of God’s agenda from the beginning of time. His house is intended to be “a house of prayer for all peoples” where human dignity is safeguarded regardless of who we are, where we come from, and what we believe.

It sometimes requires that we take a radical stance in order to catch people’s attention and reveal the smallness and ego-centeredness of their thinking—whether this be a religious community of nuns [deciding to construct a new outdoor chapel](#) in order to protect the sacredness of their ground from the path of an intended pipeline; a bride-to-be who [calls off her wedding and invites the homeless](#) to her reception; two known enemies sitting down and finding resolution to a common issue; restructuring our priorities to give more service to the poor and vulnerable; learning how to offer the hand of forgiveness and mercy rather than anger, resentment, and bitterness; or embracing the agony and suffering of crucifixion on the cross.

We live with seemingly conflicting opposites all of the time. Jesus’ message offers us a way to bring two distinct realities together and discover a central, healing, and harmonious meeting place. We are people of the “already and the not yet” who are called to live in this tension regardless of the cost. We are asked to love as God loves as we live in the broken, the contradictory, the mundane, the silly, and even evil. It is not our task to get everyone on the same page, to create some uniform and consistent way of thinking, or become robotic in our approach to life. It is, however, our call to be open to God’s surprises, to be vehicles of healing, to discern what God has in mind for our world and for us, to challenge conventional and outdated ways of thinking and being, and becoming risk-takers whose thoughts and actions catch people’s attention and cause

them to think. It requires that we drop the exaggerated concern we have with ourselves and the impressions people may have of us and risk looking silly as we find our way through this often silly but graced world.

As our relationship with God unfolds and we begin to celebrate the love relationship we have with our Creator, we will lose our preoccupation with trying to score points for heaven or achieving some personal satisfaction and learn how to love and embrace all things and people as God does. We will understand that the primary task of discipleship is learning how to discern and cooperate with God's life-giving, loving, and all unifying plan of salvation. Only a contemplative heart can love those most difficult to love and do what is most challenging and risky to do. O God, let all the nations praise you!

Rev. Mark Suslenko

PRAYER

What we would like to do is change the world—
make it a little simpler for people
to feed, clothe and shelter themselves
as God intended them to do...

We can to a certain extent change the world;
we can work for the oasis,
the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world.
We can throw our pebble in the pond
and be confident that its ever widening circle
will reach around the world...

There is nothing that we can do but love,
and dear God—please enlarge our hearts
to love each other, to love our neighbor,
to love our enemy as well as our friend.

—Dorothy Day, from "[Love Is the Measure](#)".

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