

Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Bob

Our scripture for this Twenty-First Sunday is a challenge to us act on God's invitation—to walk in God's ways—to remind and challenge us that we need to act now to be included in God's plan—not to wait until it is comfortable for us.

A radio pastor once compared the discipline of inclusion—the discipline that is talked about in today Word—to two porcupines that found themselves in the middle of a blizzard struggling to keep warm. Because of their quills, the nearer to each other they huddled, the more painful it became. Soon they had to move apart and lie beside each other, shivering in the cold. They needed each other even though they needled each other. So many of us, said the pastor, are porcupine Christians. We have our good points but we allow certain “sticking points” to keep us apart.

What are our “Sticking points”? Some allow race or gender to separate and divide. Some choose to exclude people on the basis of hair color, eye color and ethnic background. Remember the Third Reich's penchant for Aryan features? Others cherish the experience of the exclusive clique or organization that legislates membership according to the largeness of one's salary, one's political leanings, ethnicity or even religion.

Mohandas Gandhi once wrote that in his student days he was truly interested in the Bible. Deeply moved by the message of the Gospels, Gandhi, a Hindu, seriously considered becoming a convert since Christianity seemed to offer a real solution to the caste system that divided the people of India. Once Sunday, Gandhi went to a nearby church to attend services. He decided to see the minister and ask for instruction in the way of salvation and enlightenment on other doctrines. But when he entered the church, the ushers refused to seat him and suggested that he go and worship with his own kind. Gandhi left and did not return. “If Christians have caste differences also” he said to himself, “I might as well remain a Hindu.”

We sit here today and doubt that we would do the same. Our ministers of Hospitality would never refuse a seat to anyone! But the Word of God today reminds us that God is radically inclusive—and so should we be also. We need to inventory ourselves and wonder who we exclude—who we would be separated from—who we see as “different”. What are our sticking points? We're certainly more subtle in our separation than the Third Reich or the usher in that church. We're more inclined to work hard at justifying our exclu-

siveness. Do we excuse it on the issue of safety—The War on Terror can give us many excuses! Do we excuse it on the issue of morality? Sometimes we make ourselves a bit more moral than God! Do we excuse it on the issue of timing? The kids are too young—the job is too demanding—my life is too complicated. I'll work on including the other when things change.

Once upon a time there was a blacksmith who worked hard at his trade. The day came for him to die. The angel was sent to him and much to the angel's surprise he refused to go. He pleaded with the angel to make his case before God, that he was the only blacksmith in the area and it was time for all his neighbors to begin their planting and sowing. He was needed. So the angel pleaded his case before God. He said that the man didn't want to appear ungrateful and that he was glad to have a place in the kingdom, but could he put off going for a while? And he was left.

About a year or two later the angel came back again with the same message: the Lord was ready to share the fullness of the kingdom with him. Again he had had reservations and said: “A neighbor of mine is seriously ill, and it's time for the harvest. A number of us are trying to save his crops so that his family won't become destitute. Please come back later.” and off the angel went again.

Well, it got to be a pattern. Every time the angel came, the blacksmith had one excuse or another. The blacksmith would just shake his head and tell the angel where he was needed and declined. Finally, the blacksmith grew very old, weary and tired. He decided it was time and so he prayed: “God, if you'd like to send your angel again, I'd be glad to come home now.” Immediately the angel appeared, as if from around the corner of the bed. The blacksmith said: “If you want to take me home, I'm ready to live forever in the kingdom of heaven.” And the angel laughed and looked at the blacksmith in delight and surprise and said: “Where do you think you've been all these years?” He was home.

Jesus talks to us today about the narrow gate. It's not that we can't get through the gate to salvation. It's not even that the opportunities might pass us by. It's really that we have to pay attention—we have to realize the path and seize the opportunities that are continually offered to love—to heal—to care for the others. Our choices to be God's people are many—we simply have to make the choice.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 66:18-21

Hebrews 12:5-13

Luke 13:22-30

August 25, 2013

亨利神父的故事：「我在那裡找到耶穌」

「明天早上」外科醫生開始說，「我將會動手術，打開你的心臟……」。

「你會發現那裡會有耶穌」男孩子打斷了醫師的談話。

外科醫師不耐煩地抬頭看了一眼「我要切開你的心臟」，醫師繼續講下去「看看裏面糟糕到什麼程度…」。

「但是當你打開我的心那一刻，你會發現耶穌在那裡」，外科醫師向沈默的坐在一旁的父母使了個眼色，說道「當我檢查過心臟損傷的情形之後，我會縫合你的心臟和胸腔，並且計劃下一步該如何進行」。

「但是你會發現耶穌在我心裏」聖經上記載著祂住在那裡，聖歌也明明唱著祂住在那裡，你一定會在我的心裏找到耶穌。

外科醫師受夠了，「我會告訴你，我在你的心臟看到的東西，我會找到受損的心肌，血液供給不足，脆弱的血管，如果我有本領醫好你，我就能找出方法」，「你也會發現耶穌，祂住在我心裏。」外科醫師轉身就走。

外科醫師坐在自己的辦公室內，寫著小朋友的手術摘要，「主動脈和肺靜脈受損，廣泛性心肌退化，無法進行換心移植，沒有痊癒的希望」。

治療方式：給予止痛劑和臥床休息。

預後：醫師停筆一會兒，然後記下「一年內死亡」。

他停止記錄手術摘要，但是有滿肚子的話要說，不講不痛快，「為什麼？」他大聲地問著「為什麼要這樣作？讓他躺在醫院裡，把痛苦施加在他的身上，年齡還那麼小就要面臨死亡，為什麼？」

天主回應說「這個男孩，我的羔羊，他不會留在你世上的羊群裡太久，因為他是我羊群裏的一隻而且永遠都是，這裡，在我的羊棧中，他將不會感到痛苦，還有你想像不到的舒適，他的父母有一天也會在這兒和男孩重相聚，到時他們就能體會到平安，我的羊群將日益茁壯」。

外科醫師的熱淚不止，但他的憤怒更熾熱「創造了這個男孩，設計這顆心臟，男孩會在幾個月內死亡，為什麼？」

天主回答說：「這個男孩，我的小羊，該回到我的羊群裡，因為他已盡了他的責任，我不會把我的小羊放牧在你的羊群裡，致使它迷失了方向，相反的，我要籍著小男孩找回另外一隻迷途的羊。」（註一）

外科醫師的淚水沾濕了臉龐，坐在男孩的病床邊，男孩子的父母坐在醫師的對面，小男孩恢復了知覺，輕輕地低語，「你打開了我的心臟了嗎？」

「是的」，外科醫師回答他。

「你找到什麼？」小男孩問道。

「我在那裡找到了耶穌。」外科醫師告訴小男孩。

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今天我在公車上看到一位有著一頭閃亮金髮的可愛女孩，她看起來是那樣的快樂到讓我羨慕，我還希望自己能有如此的美麗，當她突然間站起離去時，我看見她沿著車子的走道蹣跚地跛行，她只有一條腿，靠拐杖支撐，當她經過我的身邊，給了我一個微笑。

哦，天主，當我發牢騷的時候請原諒我，我有敏捷的雙腳，世界是我的。

後來當我停下來買一些糖時，我和賣糖果的年青小帥哥一起聊聊天，他看起來很興奮，反正我聊天聊到遲了，也沒什麼大關係，當我離開時，小帥哥告訴我「謝謝，你好親切，和像你這樣的人聊天真不錯，你看著我」他說「我是瞎子」。

哦，天主，當我發牢騷的時候請原諒我，我有明亮的雙眼，世界是我的。

稍後，沿著街道往下走，我看見眼珠兒是湛藍色的孩子，他站在一旁望著其他正在玩的小朋友，看樣子那位藍眼睛的孩子不曉得如何去玩遊戲，我站了一會兒，於是我說「親愛的，你為什麼不去加入他們呢？」孩子沈默的抬頭看我，那時，我明白了，他喪失了聽力。

哦，天主，當我嘀咕抱怨的時候請原諒我，我有健全的耳朵，世界是我的。

有雙腿帶著我到任何我要去的地方，有雙眼看絢麗奪目的日落。有雙聆聽的耳朵讓我聽任何我要知道的…

哦，天主，當我嘀咕抱怨的時候請原諒我，我真真確確的需要你的祝福，世界是我的。

註一：另外一隻羊是指文中的外科醫生。

摘自「教友生活周刊」