

Ordinary Sunday No.15

Sunday, July 10th 2016

“... AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR ? ...”

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, I ask myself, how will we – individually, and as a faith community -- be different at this time next year?

What will we find ourselves doing differently in 2017 after a year of implementing compassion in 2016 ? Will the faith we share be more recognizable, more welcoming, more inclusive?

Do we have the will to discover that we could be more than we are today?

What will we do, together, to find and stand by the most bereft, those who fall between the cracks, who are either overlooked or too-far-off-mark for public and private agencies with their very, very, very focused mission statements?

One broken, or breaking person at a time, is there something WE can do?

YES! YES! YES! The most liberating word in the universe.

Not because everything can be fixed. It can't, but the paralysis that comes from isolation and despair *can* be relieved by something as simple as kindness ... and if it's pragmatic, it might have to be daring, and probably inconvenient.

I personally am convinced that the amount of good we can do in the universe is directly proportionate to our willingness to be inconvenienced.

Pragmatically, what might we bring to the broken by simple togetherness? What if, by our attention, they felt

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noticed, invited to join . . . US ?

By the kindness of food shared; not just a liturgical, ritual meal; sharing a sandwich and a cool drink on the street, in our own homes, with those who thought they were unnoticed; unwanted.

The simple kindness of listening to a neurotic old guy's story, his tiresome soliloquy about his arthritic fingers and his fearsome recent forgetfulness. The kindness of remembering his story – and of showing up again, and asking about his arthritis; welcoming the frightened old margin-feeder into companionship.

The immigrant Poor – do we know any? Think of the pushcart community. They're all around us -- often the poorest and most disdained, ignored men in the city, on the fringes of our comfort zone. Fathers, and the families behind them.

ASSIMILATION. Think about it:

The responsibility is *OURS*. *WE'RE* the ones who already are here. *WE* are already the US in our community. *WE* belong.

We're the ones who have the resources, create the boundaries, allow or disallow, welcome or ignore, share, or exclude.

THEY can only do the best they can *to live the life they know*, in a new land, while looking yearningly into somebody else's window.

Who would be the *outsiders* next year – ANY year -- if enough of us took up the challenge to see (and take in) today's outsiders as *insiders*? As "one of US"?

JUMP! JUMP! Let go! Do something. SOMETHING.

Looking the magnitude of hopelessness in the eye is not the same as choosing paralysis. **DO SOMETHING.**

Compassion sometimes takes more effort than we feel ready to give. Tonight, let us pray to the God of our Laundry Lists, our Wish Lists, our well-intended To Do Lists, our “We should think about this as a parish” Lists. Let us pray with guts – and with the Do-It itch.

God, whisper us into Wisdom. Introduce us to new pragmatism. Stir up in us the courage to practice it, mercifully, compassionately, creatively, albeit fearfully – with trepidation — with YOU, out-of-the-box-kindly.

Amen.

MY “poster” for this Year of Mercy is Michaelangelo’s “Creation” – the finger of God reaching out, *not quite touching* the finger of newly minted Man. **WE** complete the touch. **WE.**

This Year of Mercy is a time to re-think how **WE** got to where *we* are – ourselves, our families, our church, our communities, our world. Time to take a second look at the world **WE** have created, here, in our parish, our community, in Dignity, where hope and faith are givens; where **WE** feel comfortable.

What *could* it be like? Should we be doing more than what we’re doing? This Year of Mercy invites us to try something new; or to try again.

THINK “FIAT”. Another way of saying YES! Sure. Can do. You’ve got it.

YES! Let there be Humanity. Touch someone new; someone annoying; someone here; on the way to here. What was the last time I touched someone with unexpected kindness?

YES! Let there be Light, and Peace; kindness; hope; trust; gentleness; compassion.

LET THERE BE WELCOME. Let there be Belonging. Belonging creates *new* expectations, *new possibilities*. Are we up to becoming a new creation? Here? Together with *one* outsider?

YES! LET THERE BE TOLERANCE AMONG US. Let it be. As my Dad used to say, “Even the self-righteous *can* be right”.

LET THERE BE WILLINGNESS TO RE-THINK; to accept new understandings. So often, we are blinded by what we see,

see passionately; oblivious of all that we don't see.

My own prayer, as I left my monastery in the South Bronx,
“*God, give us the courage to step back from even the good things that we are doing so that we can see what still needs to be done*”.

RELIGION(S) too easily allow us to pray and beseech on behalf of those who really need US, not our distant prayers.

WE heal each other. WE open the possibility of healing by simple touches, by unexpected Welcome.

Every wound, every injury, every crippling, painful memory has a core where possibility lies. When someone, someday, touches that core, possibilities emerge.

This unfolding world, this vibrant, vast universe – it really IS *all about us*. OUR fingers . . . and hands . . . and hearts at the end of God's finger, reaching , touching one another.

The world of God's creating won't happen any other way. It's up to us. How deeply do I believe this? Look at US . . . ME ... all of US together, and see. Come to ME. Come to ME, all you who are burdened. Come to Me, you Hungry. Come to ME, you who languish alone, and I – I will refresh you !

Can our church say this? Today? To one not-yet Americanized family, for example, who have only their lifetime customs and fading hopes to cling to?

Can we? What are WE doing for the unassimilated?

COME. Come to ME. To US.

Innovation takes only one breakaway thinker to start; it takes a few more of us to catch-on; to change the odds, change the norm. CREATION IS ONGOING. WE are NOT passive players. *OUR CHOICES, OUR BEHAVIORS, EACH DAY CREATE THE WORLD.*

WE'RE EQUALLY “NOW” AND “NOT-YET” AND “WAS” – BUT “NOW” IS THE ONLY PLACE WE CAN ACT. LET ME -- LET US do what we can with what we have.

Why? Why not? Why not NOW? NOW!

We're ALL now probably farther along our lifeline than we normally mind. We're ALL living our allotted days and nights while the words we share – by themselves – the songs we sing, even in this hour of deliberate, focused awareness – do NOTHING to bring about the corrections that we assure each other need to be made.

NOW is the time to write the end-story, one breath, one risk, one mischievous laugh, one off-the-wall pragmatic innovation at a time.

A Favorite Poem . . . Eliza Grizwold – “*Tigers*”, from *Wideawake Field*.© Farrar, Straus and Giroux

*What are we now but voices
who promise each other a life
neither one can deliver
not for lack of wanting
but wanting won't make it so.
We cling to a vine
at the cliff's edge.
There are tigers above
and tigers below. **Let us love
one another and let go.***