

Homily 23rd Sunday Year A 2023

Dag Hammarskjöld wrote:

Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who 'forgives' you —out of love—takes upon himself the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice. The price you must pay for your own liberation through another's sacrifice is that you in turn must be willing to liberate in the same way, irrespective of the consequences to yourself.

The psalmist reminds us that *God is kind and merciful, slow to anger and rich in compassion. The real motivation for forgiveness is gratitude, loving gratitude. If someone has had pity on me out of love, then I will be deeply appreciative. I will want to give to someone else the liberation I have received, especially if that person has hurt me. I will want to pass the gift on.* (John Foley SJ) Let us reflect on the Gospel from the point of view of what is happening to our creation.

The type of confrontation promoted in the gospel is unpleasant and hard, even though our cause may well be right and just. What today's Gospel encourages us to do, however, is justified confrontation and it is a necessity. The climate crisis requires confrontation with the world's powerful governments, finance institutions, and extractive industries. Each of these entities benefits, in various ways, from the status quo of the climate crisis. Finance institutions enjoy profits from oil and gas – which they have financed to the tune of trillions of pounds since the Paris Climate Agreement. Extractive industries profit from the continued growth of their businesses at the very time when they should be giving way to clean energy. Some governments benefit by playing to a nationalist, anti-climate, anti-immigrant, anti-women base of support.

Too many faith communities, and their clergy, are uncomfortable about confronting these powerful forces. They fear that if they speak out, they will suffer criticism and claims that they are mixing politics and religion and, in some cases experience a backlash from certain wealthy benefactors. These fears, while both predictable and understandable, are hurdles which faith communities must overcome. If it is utterly wrong to destroy God's creation, then it is certainly wrong to profit from such destruction. WE have a responsibility to society, and a sacred duty, to speak out in the face of wrong. Confrontation of evil is part of the prophetic tradition of the church. Now is such a time for us to raise our prophetic voices, remembering we were anointed prophets in our baptism.

In the words of the late great prophet Archbishop Tutu:

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

So, as people of faith, we are called to act – we draw strength from our traditions from our shared Eucharistic celebration, from our songs of joy and lament. We draw on the love we have for our neighbour and for our children, and we stand within the prophetic tradition of the saints who have gone before us.

So! Wake up! It is time!

One good tern deserves another

Arctic terns, birds long famous for their thousands of miles migratory habits, have been profoundly affected by climate change. Researchers have determined that as landmarks have disappeared due to loss of ice, some terns get stressed to the point of prematurely ending their flights.

Exposure to cannabis was found to reduce stress levels in the stopped birds, allowing them to continue their journey. A team was formed to find the colonies of stragglers and drop marijuana smoke bombs onto the birds. The head of the expedition acknowledged that it was a huge undertaking, but vowed to leave **no tern unstoned**.