

Justice and Peace

The Awakened Heart

I. A WAY OF BEING, ACTING AND KNOWING

More than a string of activities, Justice and Peace as an *Essential Element* of our contemplative life is a way of *being, acting and knowing* that life is not about me. A deeply revolutionary mindset, it turns us around: from slumber to awareness, from isolation to universal kinship, from fear of the *other* to reconciling diversities. We become mature adults, owning a common humanity, a common home and a common destiny. We exclude no one – our zeal embraces the universe.

It is a life-long *pilgrimage* from lostness to being found.
Charted from within, it is lit by this tiny spark:
the desire for God.

“I know the plans I have for you”, declares our God, “plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares our God, “and will bring you back from captivity.”
(Jeremiah 29:10-13)

It is *embodying* the Word of God in solitude, in community, at committees and meetings, listening, speaking, listening some more. Understanding truth from facts, pairing real-life data with Mystery, paradox and conscience, holding science and faith together is to *become* another humanity for Christ. Acknowledging one’s body, guts, feelings, sinfulness, shadow-sides, dreams and gifted-ness is to *embody* Justice and Peace.

Above all, Justice and Peace is a Person, Jesus, Good Shepherd, the Just One, who is alive in everyone laying down her or his life for friends. In us all is God’s Spirit’s crying out: *Abba! Amma!*

We pray to be God’s hands and feet, eyes and ears to help build up this world that God so loves. And who are the mentors, companions and friends Jesus sends us in this most important school of loving and serving? Are they not our *Apostolic Sisters*? Our Staff? *Mission Partners*? *GSVs*? *Those we pray for and pray with*? We learn so much from each other about Mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation; what it means to be human.

We see that Jesus prefers the poor and demeaned; those who suffer or are thrown away. He chooses the margins rather than the centers of power and slowly, our choices align with his. From the world of comparison, competition, and coveting that breeds injustice, conflict and violence, we begin to be simple and content, comfortable when passed over or side-lined, diminished by age or ill-health. “Is this what it means to ‘put on the mind of Jesus’? We find out in the search for God that deification is a downward movement, permanently grounded in our *creaturehood*.”

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
Love and faithfulness go before you. (Psalm 89:14)*

II. THE EUCHARIST: A PRIMARY PRAYER TO JUSTICE AND PEACE

Jesus in the Eucharist was central to St. Mary Euphrasia and to us. The Eucharist is *remembering and thanksgiving*. The holiness of all Creation, for example, gathered in the Bread and Wine. Nothing is profane anymore because the Cosmic Christ is hidden in the smallest and remotest molecules of creation. We remember to accept the invitation to be God's co-creators, recognizing the right to existence of every species, helping to create beauty, harmony and peace.

- Everything and everyone deserves the same reverence and awe, the same attention and courtesy we give to the consecrated Host.
- Do I see Christ shining in the humblest of matter?

In the Eucharist, we remember and emulate the non-violence of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

We keep in mind servant leadership, rising quickly to wash one another's feet, not only on Holy Thursday but as often as we can because Jesus asked that we do as he did.

We do not join in the noise that wealth and ambition create but share our silence and our music, our intercessions and prayers, our hearts that sing: "*We remember how you love us.*"

In the Eucharist we continue to celebrate, believe in the Good News: forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with God and one another our feet set firmly in the ways of Peace. We never forget that before he died Jesus prayed: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

If *not-knowing* causes death,
What stops us from awaking?

III. JUSTICE AND PEACE: AN AWAKENED HEART A WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

Justice and Peace is a principle of life. Breathing in -- Breathing out, we awaken to meaning and purpose. *We take a long loving look at reality.* God's breath gathers us into one: my breath becomes the air you breathe and yours, mine, the fishes, the animals, the trees, the beasts, the heavens. *We all belong!*

To act justly, to love tenderly and walk humbly with our God we must heed the call to holiness/wholeness. It is not a call to be flawless, to make no mistakes. On the contrary. It is the daily experience of fragmentation, limitation and sinfulness. But also, the nearness of One whose 'Mercy outrides ... the dimness in us' whose tenderness infinitely outstrips the silliness in us. We allow Christ to 'Easter in us'

An awakened heart at the service of Justice and Peace keeps in mind Mary Euphrasia's advise to her daughters: *You must live by love. Fear is not made for you.* And Jesus' reminder: *Fear not little flock for it pleases your Father to give you the kingdom.* (Luke 12:32) "I love you more than life itself" St. Jean Eudes wrote to a friend.

We realize we live in a universe that is benign and is on our side. Boggled down with problems, we realize our dilemmas cannot be solved on the same level of consciousness that created them (Einstein). We have

to practice being still, aligned, surrendered, to let forth from our depths the deeper Intelligence who creates and imagines for us new pathways out of the troubles and fixes we find ourselves in, or, nudge us to evolve into something entirely never heard of before. In the words of St. Paul,

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we may understand what God has freely given us.” (1 Cor 2:10-12)

Justice and Peace cultivates in us the truth that *we are responsible for one another*. We are aghast and burdened by the immense gap between the rich and the poor. We are not good stewards of our common home. Our persecution of those different from us is frightening. “*Father, forgive us because we do not know what we are doing.*” We allow the breaches and walls and wars that cruelly divide our world to burst open our hearts so that the Suffering Servant may come in and *hallow* them, transforming them into *Sacred Space*. On it, as on an altar, we place (without any self-referencing whatsoever) all the little acts of decency and kindness and humanity that we are capable of. Or, if we still have an egoic ‘*supernova*’ somewhere, we burst it out of its mighty throne – who knows if the brilliance it flares forth in death may just be the starlight a drifter needs to find her way back home. *Is not redemptive love another level of consciousness other than the level that created the ascendancy of a few over the many?*

The tender care that we give our elderly and sick Sisters speaks prophetically to the trillions we spend on defense while cutting out support and welfare for the most vulnerable. The advocacy and service we give to our brothers and sisters who have nowhere to lay their heads, or are in prison, an immigrant without papers or a refugee exiled from country, a trafficked child stolen from home to be a slave of labor and sex remind us that all of us, all of us, are made in the *image of God* and it is just, it is right, that we give each other what we owe them: our love.

The shadows fall. The stars appear. The birds begin to sleep. Night embraces the silent half of the earth. A vagrant, a destitute wanderer with dusty feet, finds her way down a new road. A homeless God, lost in the night, without papers, without identification, without even a number, a frail expendable exile lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world and entrusts Herself to sleep.

■ *Hagia Sophia*
Thomas Merton

To be a disciple is to have witnessed the Resurrection, to have one’s heart and whole being awakened. Each breath, every heartbeat, is in the Cosmic Christ who listens to the cries of the poor. As Mary Magdalen put it to the disciples who felt bereft and in terror after the Crucifixion, “I have seen the Lord and he told me to tell you that *He is Risen ...*”. HE IS ALIVE!

*“Love and faithfulness embrace;
Peace and Justice kiss.”*
Psalm 85:10