

**December 4, 2016
2nd Sunday of Advent**

Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever

We Were Made For These Times

Background

First century Palestine was divided between the Jerusalem priestly elite and the people and their ordinary priests living in the outlying villages. The oppression worked upon the people and their ordinary priests by the Jerusalem elite and their Roman patrons was experienced in exorbitant taxes, confiscation of ancestral property, and chronic shortages of food, among other things.

Today

We see many of these same forms of oppression in our country today: strident racism; sexual degradation as national entertainment; dishonesty as national policy; the torture and murder of innocent non-combatants as national policy, jobs are less secure, as are health care, pensions, the environment, and even our marriages. I wish I were making this up.

Different kinds of responses to oppression

Even though we see many of the same issues today, we see different kinds of responses to them. Some are helpful, others are not.

One response is “*to blame others,*” especially our political leaders, for our problems - “*It’s all their fault!*” Not helpful. This is manifestly scapegoating, plus the fact that the problems of today are not just their problems, they are all of ours - the whole country.

Another response to our problems of today is that of “*despair - I give up.*” This only leads to indifference and cynicism. This response is toxic, it paralyzes us which can lead to violence.

A third kind of response is “*to confront the injustice around us*” - to try to make things right. This is happening in our Jesuit colleges and universities around the country. One example is Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix, Arizona. The principle of Brophy had this to say about tensions in the school the day after the presidential election. This is found in an article in the current issue of the National Catholic Reporter, November 17, 2016.

“The day after the U.S. presidential election, students at Jesuit Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix, AZ, reported disturbing incidents, including Latino students being asked by fellow students if they realized that their last day at Brophy would conclude with the inauguration of Donald Trump.

“When students at Jesuit Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, gathered to protest the election, a truck waving a Confederate flag deliberately drove by the group. At Jesuit Marquette University High School, several students reported they were taunted after the election, including one student who said another student put a sticker on his back that read, "Go Back to Mexico."

“At Jesuit Santa Clara University, the school’s Undocumented Students and Allies Association hosted a walk out in solidarity with undocumented students, who have felt a growing panic since the election of Donald Trump. And the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C., said that it is discussing the topic of sanctuary designation, which would limit a school’s cooperation with federal immigration authorities.”

A fourth way of responding is: “*seeing to redress these wrongs as a vocation of our faith.*” In her article “*We Were Made For These Times,*” Clarissa Pinkola Estes, American poet, post-trauma specialist and Jungian psychoanalyst speaks to this way of responding to the dark times around us.

“My friends, do not lose heart. We were made for these times. Ours is a time of almost daily astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most to civilized, visionary people. Yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope, because the fact is we were made for these times. Yes, for years, we have been learning, practicing, been in training for and just waiting to meet on this exact plain of engagement.

“In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or un-mended in the world. Do not focus on that. The tendency to dwell on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be, weakens you. Do not focus there. That is spending the wind without raising the sails.

“We are needed, that is all we can know. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us and guide us, and we will know them when they appear. Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good.

“What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

“One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times

like these, to be fierce and to show mercy toward others: both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity.

“There will always be times when you feel discouraged. I too have felt despair many times in my life, but I do not keep a chair for it. I will not entertain it. It is not allowed to eat from my plate. The reason is this: in my uttermost bones I know there can be no despair when you remember why you came to Earth, who you serve, and who sent you here. The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours. They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here. In that spirit, I hope you will write this on your wall: when a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.”

Which of these responses most appeals to you?

For me, it is the last one: seeing ourselves made by God for these times. This gives me hope mainly in that Salvation is God’s work; it is the work of God’s Holy Spirit to help us face life in a way that brings peace.

When we do address matters of concern in company with God, there will be peace, and

“the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra’s den, and the child lay his hands on the adder’s lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on my holy mountain, for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the sea.”

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