

4th Sunday after Easter

**“My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish”**

*The success of humanity's evolution will not be determined by
“survival of the fittest,” but by our own capacity to converge and unify*

Change of an Era

It is true, isn't it, that we tend to consider our relationship with God and each other in personal terms - how kind, forgiving, compassionate and so on that we are. We heard an example of this last weekend when hearing the story of Fr. Greg Boyle and his work with gangs in East L.A. - how in his words he helps them discover who they already are. And of course, this is good and most helpful.

But there is another dimension to our relationship with God and each other. It is in the political, economic, & social spheres of our country & world. We need to look at these too because as we can so plainly see around us, there is a change happening in our world order. As Pope Francis says, we are not in an era of change, we are in a change of an era. Let us listen to two people who are addressing this. They are two of the most leading “cosmic” spiritual teachers of our time.

Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr
from his “Daily Meditations” online

“We won't be able to focus on the well-being of each other if we don't break free from our usual loyalties and low-level payoffs--the system that gave us our security, our status, our economics, and our very identity.

“Jesus focused on freeing people from religious, political, social, and economic oppression - what Pope John Paul II called "*structural*" and "*institutional sin*". These go beyond just trying to free ourselves from our own particular "naughty behaviors," which is what sin now seems to mean to most people in our individualistic culture.

Structural sin is accepted as good on the corporate or national level. Large organizations, including the Church and governments, get away with it and are even applauded for killing (war), greed, vanity, pride, and ambition. Yet individuals are condemned for committing these same sins. Such a convenient split will never create free people or peaceful nations.

“We seem prone to feeling entitled, and to blaming and projecting our negativity on others. Never has there been a people on this earth who have so much; yet we complain about how little

we have! We live some of the easiest lives of anyone in history or in the present, but still it isn't enough. It's as if we've been blinded by an illusion, or delusion, of scarcity.

“Immigrants, welfare recipients, incarcerated, mentally ill, disabled and all who are marginalized by mainstream society, are the focus of Jesus’ life - today. When we deny our relatedness to the poor, the weak, the simple, and the unlovable, we define ourselves over and against God and decide who is worthy of our attention and who can be rejected. When we hermetically seal ourselves off from the undesired ‘other,’ we seal ourselves off from God. By rejecting God in our neighbor, we reject God in our selves. As long as we are mostly interested in ourselves, there will never be actual love of equality, true freedom, or peace.”

Franciscan Sr. Ilia Delio

whose article, “*Politics & the World's Future*,”
is in the latest issue of the National Catholic Reporter

“The results of our presidential primaries are a wake-up call to the reality that our political system no longer works. It is not simply that the parties are internally divided; rather, our political system is worn out. Our political structures have worked until now, but it is taking more and more energy to keep these structures alive or from the inevitable: a total collapse.

“The person who saw a life-giving future in a world of change was the Jesuit scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard speaks about emerging consciousness in every level of life, including politics. He points out the obvious fact that life changes, new things happen and, given a sufficient amount of time, new forms will appear. There are no fixed forms. We live in an evolving, unfinished universe.

“The present political climate is zapping our energies and instilling a new level of fear, just the opposite of what Teilhard saw we needed: a zest for life and a grand option for the future. Several candidates have promised to ‘*make America great again*’ or to ‘*take back our country*.’ What does the phrase ‘*take back this country*’ mean? Where shall we go back to? Ousting foreigners evokes a type of Aryan cleansing that occurred in Germany less than 100 years ago that is frightening.

“We cannot return to Puritan America, where ‘*Leave it to Beaver*’ modeled the ideal family who gathered on Sunday evening to watch ‘*The Ed Sullivan Show*.’ The days of American triumphalism are over. We are evolving into a new world community, a new consciousness of being America that includes religious and ethnic pluralism and a global economy; we are participants in a global community. We are not kings and queens ruling the world; we are part of an indivisible whole. The sooner we can develop new political structures that support the evolution of global humanity, the more zest for life we will have, kindling new energy and creating a more unified world.”

How does this apply to us today?

Our political process can no longer afford to remain a spectator sport where we simply sit on the sidelines and watch to see who makes the most points. We need to focus on how Jesus' world view, which is the only one that has ever worked for everybody in this world, can help develop new political attitudes and structures that support the evolution of global humanity, kindle new energy, and create a more unified world.

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Lord, help us hear your voice so we may have eternal life and never perish