

March 13, 2016

5th Sunday of 5 Lent

**Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me. (Entrance Antiphon)**

*We need to discover the connections among us which forge unity,
not differences that fragment and divide us*

This is a cry for justice that we are hearing more and more in our land. And at the same time, we are more and more seeing people throwing political stones at one another. What is going on?

Two Articles

I read during this past week two articles which I found very helpful in trying to understand what is going on - some would say falling apart - in our country. I would like to share some excerpts from them with you in the hope that you may find them helpful too.

“Return our Country to its Moorings”

Editorial in the National Catholic Reporter for March 5, 2016

“Our political campaign is witnessing an especially virulent strain of political opportunism that has erupted in the body politic. It’s not the political candidates who are causing this. They are but a symptom of a rising political fundamentalism that is in pursuit of a one-view dogmatic purity. Political candidates are the consequence of allowing these worst instincts to flourish among us, like weeds gone wild in the garden of public virtue.

“The unrelenting crudeness of our political discourse is shocking us into seeing the disconnect from traditional conservative concerns for the working class and for policies and programs essential to a just society. Electing any candidate to the White House will not do much to end the standoff that seems to have become a permanent feature of the U.S. government. Politics, government, compromise and common good are the real strength of a pluralistic democracy. They protect us from the kind of nativism and racially tinged invective as well as the juvenile sniping that has dominated so much of this election season.”

What will help us not discover the connections among us which forge unity, and not differences that fragment and divide? By creating a society that does “not” offer security for its own and sanctuary for the innocent, the daring, the desperate who believe that we are the world's last hope

Give us justice, O God, and plead our cause against a nation that is faithless.

From the deceitful and cunning rescue us.

“The United States is having an identity crisis”

Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB. National Catholic Reporter, March 8, 2016

“In the public and political turmoil of 19th century Russia, novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky is said to have commented, “To live without hope is to cease to live.” Perhaps Americans have never understood that feeling better than now. The images of refugees streaming across Europe, clinging to overcrowded boats in the Mediterranean Sea, huddled in the middle of rubble in bombed out villages in the Middle East is almost more than I can take. It is as if the world has fallen down around us, as if all of us went to bed one night and woke up the next morning on a different planet. Most damaging of all, it is a planet I do not want to be on. Why? Because this is a planet I grew up believing would never exist. At least not here. Not in the United States. This has become a planet at war with itself.

“The United States, I was told as I grew, was a land with an open heart, a land of mixed cultures but one soul. It was a land in which the culture of others mixed its customs with our own so that we could all be proud to be Irish and Italian, Polish and Hispanic, African and Asian, Christian and Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim, Hindu and Orthodox -- “American” -- because so many had come as immigrants to add to the DNA of it.

“At the same time, it was not an easy process for any of them, we know. We remember “Irish need not apply,” the “Chinese Exclusion Act,” “white drinking fountains” and, on election day, non-Catholic presidents only. But, given the time it takes for one worldview to become integrated with another, it did, in the end, always work.

“Only in the United States is there a “Statue of Liberty” to offer immigrants something to strive for, something to believe in, something to trust as sign of the humanity of humanity. If we don't, what will we become? Barring Muslims from coming to the United States “until our country's representatives figure out what's going on” is blatant racism and brazen religious discrimination. It smells of Germany 1939, only this time it is Muslims, not Jews, who are the scapegoats. The argument is that we must do this in the name of defense and security.

“If we don't accept that openness is our best defense under threat, we will prove that what those who want to destroy us say is true: ‘that Americans are self-centered, are making their money off the resources of the poor of the world, are hypocrites who plead peace and then arm the rest of the world in order to watch one small group destroy another’.

“It is true that our Native American history is still to be resolved. It is true that many of those who don't want to accept the immigrants of today had no trouble accepting the fact of slave ships of yesterday. It is true that we were begged in 1939 to accept a boat full of Jewish immigrants at the beginning of WWII and, instead, returned them to Europe to die. It is true we moved Japanese Americans to internment camps. But we have lived to regret every one of those retreats to xenophobia. If there is to be hope for others now, there can only be hope for us now by refusing to turn out the light on the Lady Liberty in our time.

“From where I stand, it seems that indeed we must each do something. We must talk again about what America’s traditional values really are. We need to find a way to create both security and sanctuary for the innocent, the daring, the desperate who believe that we are the world's last hope. And we need to ask ourselves why it is that the pope's call to every parish, every religious order, and every convent to support a refugee family has yet to be invoked here? Or does the death of immigrants not fit under the category of pro-life in our Catholic Voter's Guide this year?”

What will help us discover the connections among us which forge unity rather than differences that fragment and divide is creating a society that offers security for its own and sanctuary for the innocent, the daring, the desperate who believe that we are the world's last hope

**Give us justice, O God, and plead our cause against a nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue us.**

What is our country going?

The political life in our country can go in two directions. It can move towards a single-view political ideology to which all must adhere, which is a type of fascism. This is a narrow view which doesn’t treat others or God the way we want to them to treat us.

Or, our political life can move towards offering security for its own, and sanctuary for the innocent, the daring, the desperate who believe that we are the world's last hope, which is a description of democracy. This is a wide view which treats others and God the way we want to them to treat us.

It is easy to tell which view we are in by the tone of our voice and the expression on our face. It’s not that we are in one camp or the other, it’s that sometimes we are in one, and at other time we are in the other, which is why we need to keep praying:

**Give us justice, O God, and plead our cause against a nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue us.**