

First Reading: Isaiah 50.5-9

Second Reading: James 2.14-18

Gospel: Mark 8.27-35

Ilia Delio¹ describes how the Jesuit scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin held “that God is at the heart of cosmological and biological life, the depth and centre of everything that exists... Our nature is already endowed with grace, and thus our task is to be attentive to that which is within and that which is without – mind and heart so that we may contribute to building up the world in love. Every action can be sacred action if [it] is rooted in love, and in this way, both Christians and non-Christians can participate in the emerging body of Christ.”

And so it is in this light that I reflect with you the Scripture Readings for this 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time and 2nd week of the Season of Creation.

James tells us that if we have faith, if we have real faith, then just being is not enough – we have to “do” something about it”. We have to live out that faith. In AA I learned the saying: “it is not enough to talk the talk – we must learn to walk the walk”. I have also heard it described as “contemplation in action”. One of my dearest friend speaks of the BE-attitudes, saying that “our doing flows from our being” – so we must BE in order to DO.

And it is not just about people, but rather as Teilhard spoke of it – it is about all of creation. Our planet and all of nature becomes a witness to our faith and gratitude for all that God has given us to care for. How we love and teach our children, our students, our friends... How we greet the stranger, the homeless and those in prison – how we love our neighbours and respect their traditions and cultures. How we care for our planet and her health – respecting the rights

¹ Ilia Delio, *The Hours of the Universe: Reflections on God, Science and the Human Journey*

of all living beings. It is all interconnected with our faith and our response to that which God gives to us.

John Shea² in sharing his thoughts on today's scriptures wrote: "It is crucial to bestow awareness on what is most valuable. This larger life is what is most valuable. So, putting all of our energy into gaining the whole world is not a profitable enterprise. It only means we will lose what is most valuable. It is a misplaced focus. Therefore, we must deny this tendency to center everything on this small sense of ourselves." Could this be the distraction, the temptation put to Jesus when he said, "Get behind me Satan!"

Last weekend Fr. Jim introduced us to the word "Oikos" which is the root word for ecology – which is the science of relationships of organisms to each other and their surroundings. How we live with each other and all created things.

Today's readings present to us encounters that involve revelations that dissolve illusion and false hope, [then] an invitation to a path awakens and prepares us for true hope.

It has been twenty years since the Twin Towers were attacked and collapsed. In the days that followed many of the helpers, were there because the Lord had opened their hearts just as Isaiah speaks of – they went into rescue and save those when both the 1st and the 2nd tower was attacked and then crumbled. This past Wednesday – they announced that they have identified the remains of two of those people who responded to hope. Today we are being asked to follow their lead with the cascading sufferings of today's world from war, from the warming and thawing of our polar areas, flooding and drought, and raging wildfires that are devastating every corner of our life and the life of our planet.

² John Shea: The Spiritual wisdom of the gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers

We are being called to healing and rebuilding – of our homes and our lives, our lands and our oceans and the very air and atmosphere that nourishes and protects us all. Healing, rebuilding is the result and power of love. “Acts of selfless love are bold and courageous. Taking up the cross is brave and transformative. It is in these acts that illusions collapse and suffering is embraced that save us.”

³“What ‘get behind me Satan’ do we need to say so that we can be freed of fear, awaken, have ears and eyes opened, embrace suffering and be usable for God *pause* and the power of real love to heal and transform our lives and the world?”

“The larger, more valuable life is God’s love. When we center ourselves in God’s love, we will follow the impulses of that love. Instead of wanting to become great, we become small. Instead of wanting to lord it over others, we grow in service. ...This way of thinking is deeply offensive to the rulers of this world, and they will not merely look the other way. We must take up this cross as the inevitable price of loving in a loveless world. This is valuing God”⁴.

None of us on our own is able to change or cure all the ills of the world, or the damage done to our planet. But imagine what it might look like if we all become change in small ways - doing small things, sharing how we live. How this might give birth to change in each other and the planet that we love and want to care for. This is how we live our faith & share our experiences of God with each other.

“Our lives have meaning and purpose... We either help build this world up in love, or, tear it apart. Either way, we bear the responsibility for the world’s future, and thus we bear responsibility for God’s life as well.” (Ilia Delio)

³ Mary McGinnity of Catholic Women Preach

⁴ John Shea