

Reflection for June 22, 2020

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We don't even have to close our eyes to see the multitude of people gathered in our country and around the world standing up, shouting out against racial discrimination and police brutality. We, a country founded on the principle of equal justice for all. We, members of a Christian community, who profess that each human being is an image of God. We are witnessing an explosion of humiliation, pain and suffering so deep we can't even begin to see the end of it.

Living in our world these last days, we find ourselves in liminal space, a threshold, a time to leave one place and enter into something entirely different.

Jesus challenges us, "do not judge for with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure with which you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbors eye, but do not notice the log in your eye? How can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye' while the log is in your eye?"

Megan McKenna, in her book on Matthew's Gospel tells this story.

Once upon a time, an old man wandered through the towns and villages. In one, he scratched a map on the plaza stones saying "I have found the waters of life. Here is where you can find them." Many ignored what he wrote, but many copied the map and set out to find such waters.

The first was a soldier coming home from the war. He craved forgiveness and a way of life that would wash away his memories of battle. He found the waters easily enough but was surprised they were in a cave and that he would have to get on his hands and knees to enter. After a moment, he stripped off his armor and piled it aside with his sword and shield. He crawled into the cave, drank and washed his face, and hands. When he emerged, he knew what he must do—he buried his armor and weapons, and clad only in a tunic, walked away, intent on undoing the harm he had done. No longer a warrior, he was free to walk in peace.

Next came a woman of erudition who had studied languages, science and mysticism. The waters of life intrigued her. In the pockets of her long dress and cape she carried her treasures, crystals, notes, candles and herbs. She, too, felt appalled that she would have to crawl through the mud to enter the cave. But she wanted those waters. She stripped, wrapped up her clothing, and hid it in the bushes. She entered, knelt, drank deep, then washed. When she emerged, she too, knew what she had to do. She donned her clothes, but cut the long sleeves, cape, train, and hood to make clothes for others. She realized that her knowledge had no value unless used to ease others' lives and give them meaning.

Lastly came a bishop adorned in miter, gloves, cape and vestments. He, too, shed his finery and bent on hands and knees to drink and to wash. When he emerged the sight of his trappings shocked him. He burned them, realizing power is meant to serve truth, authority to protect people and ritual to free others to worship.

Many others came to the cave, stripped and went in to drink. They emerged dressed and thought about what happened but returned to their lives unchanged. They didn't let what happened to them change them. They hadn't grasped what the waters of life offered.

Today, we honor the memory of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More, people who drank from the waters of life and died because of their belief in the Risen One.

And what about us? Have the waters of life challenged us to be about something new in our world? How many times have we let slide an opportunity to "be one" one with our sister or brother, becoming part of their reality, to walk their walk? Is this what is Jesus inviting us to today?