

26 Sunday B

September 30, 2018

St. Patrick

This Sunday the Letter of James speaks about money. In fact, the New Testament is not at all squeamish to address money head-on. Next month, we'll hear Jesus be very blunt.

In my time thus far at St. Patrick's, I haven't spoken to you about money. The newly-formed Parish Finance Council has done it regularly because you have a right to be well-informed about our parish's finances.

This Sunday, I want to thank you. As a parish, you have stepped up and responded wonderfully. Each week I check carefully how much we've brought in from the last Sunday's collection. What I don't do, however, is see what each household gives. I do that purposely. I try to show consistent care to all of you—with no dollar sign prompting me to favor one person over another.

Still, fully funding our six priorities we set together as a parish will be a challenge. I encourage all of us to respond with a strong financial stewardship. If you're on a fixed income, and in your offertory envelope put in a dollar or two—fine!

For the rest of us, I invite us to show our support by each household making a sacrificial offering—stretching it, that we can hopefully be the parish the Lord wants of us.

Again, I thank you.

Now, onto the other two readings. Moses' aide Joshua in the first reading, and John the apostle in the Gospel: Both label others as "outsiders." Not belonging to the approved group, they weren't "certified." Joshua and John were part of the "us." The others were "them." And they wanted *them* stopped and excluded.

A riveting book I've read is entitled, *Strength in What Remains*. It tells the story of a young man from the East African nation of Burundi. His name is "Deo Gratias." It's Latin for "Thanks be to God." His mother picked it up at the Catholic Church and named him that after she had nearly died at his birth.

Burundi is one of the five poorest countries in the world. It's next to Rwanda, and both of these nations were the site of a horrific civil war and genocide in the 1990s.

In Burundi, up to 300,000 people were killed; as many as 800,000 were massacred in Rwanda.

Two tribes mainly make up these two nations: the Tutsis and the Hutus. For centuries these tribes had a great deal in common and lived in harmony. Then European colonizers overran these nations. Germans and later Belgians instilled bitterness and hatred within the two tribes for each other. In the civil war and genocide, the two tribes butchered one another. Teachers turned on their students. Even Catholic priests killed their parishioners. (1)

In the book *Deo Gratias* tells about a Catholic High School in Burundi, one of the best schools in that country. In the midst of the civil war, the school director—a priest named Father Zachary (Abbe Zacharie)—remarkably kept the students in harmony, all 150 of them. Some of them were Tutsis; others, Hutus. The rest of the region was filled with hatred. Father Zachary made sure that the students “talked things out.” He refused their using radios, so that the poison elsewhere wouldn’t seep into the students’ hearts. “We were an example of unity,” as Father Zachary put it.

One morning Hutu militia came out of the mountains and attacked the school, “like a wolf on the fold.” They ordered the students to separate: “Hutu brothers over here, Tutsi cockroaches there” (2) Yes, “us” against “them,” as both readings show in the Scriptures today.

And, miraculously, the Hutus teenagers would not abandon their Tutsi classmates. The rebels couldn’t tell them apart, and so they tried to kill them all. “It was said that some of the dying boys quoted Jesus on the cross, crying out to God to forgive their killers because they didn’t know what they were doing” (3). In all, forty boys were massacred. They lived what the word “Catholic” means—all-embracing, universal.

Sisters and brothers: “Us” against “them.” Those who belong, and those who need to be excluded, silenced, rejected. Joshua wanted two men who weren’t on the “approved” list to be stopped. The apostle John asked Jesus to expel someone who wasn’t part of the group, and Jesus put it crisply: **“For whoever is not against us is for us.”**

These days, in so many arenas of our lives—clearly within our nation now; among diverse nations and factions in the world; and, yes—also in the church, universal and locally: So often we cut it sharply. As with other parishes, in the story of St.

Patrick's, at times divisions and anger splintered the community. "Us" against "them," and bitterness festers into hatred. Every now and again we have witnesses like those Burundi teenagers who revered one another. "In the name of Jesus," and faithful to their Catholic identity, they refused to hate, and they had to take up the cross of Jesus with him.

As Moses exclaimed, "**Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!**" One day we might be surprised to learn of the many surprising circles upon which God has showered his Spirit. St. Patrick's: May we be one of them, showing the Holy Spirit bestowed upon us!

(1) Tracy Kidder, *Strength in What Remains* (New York: Random House, 2009), pp. 183-204.

(2) *Ibid.*, pg. 210.

(3) *Ibid.*

General Intercessions

September 30, 2018

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Give your church courage to be inclusive and an instrument of peace to break down walls of division; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bestow healing to all who have been abused; be with perpetrators and those leaders who have “covered up” these crimes; bring about justice and hope within your church and world; we pray to you, O Lord—

Imbue our St. Patrick Parish with new insights as, in small groups, we reflect on Pope Francis’ reflections on the Beatitudes; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bring about just wages and working conditions to all laborers, as the Letter of St. James calls for in today’s Scripture; we pray to you, O Lord—

Teach us to reach out to the most vulnerable in our midst, especially the homeless and poor; the elderly and forgotten; the unborn and those mothers in crisis; immigrants and refugees; we pray to you, O Lord—

**Lead Pope Francis and all of us to work for the healing and justice
of all who have been abused**

**For the protection of all youth, and for those who have suffered
from abuse; we pray to you, O Lord—**

For reverence for all human life; we pray to you, O Lord--

**Give your church courage to listen to and respond creatively to the
needs of families today; we pray to you, O Lord—**

; we pray to you, O Lord—