

26 Sunday B

September 26, 2021

St. Patrick

Strong words from St. James this Sunday, words we just heard: **“Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.”**

Six years ago my spiritual director suggested that I try something “out of the box.” She recommended that I give a slice of a day each week working with those who are forced onto the margins, like the homeless—and not connected to the parish where I was serving.

I eventually chose Manna House, located on Jefferson, near Cleveland. It’s a hospitality refuge for the homeless and others “forced to the fringe.” Each Thursday morning I spend a couple of hours there. Guests are offered fresh coffee, socks and a hygiene packet, and a safe refuge to be together for community.

Also, each man has a chance to shower once a week. That’s where I serve. As each man comes to a couple of other volunteers and me, I work with the guest so that he gets a complete change of clothes—not raggedy clothes, but clean clothes in good shape. The guest then goes to the shower room with a box of fresh clothes. When he finishes, he leaves with us his dirty clothing, to get washed and cleaned by other volunteers.

It’s happened several times, enough for me to keep in my memory. I’ll be giving a supply of fresh clothing, and will offer a guest a backpack, or an extra pair of socks, something like that. And he’ll answer, “No, I have enough for now. Give it to someone else who needs it.”

Now, I don’t want to be naïve about this. There are other guests who take as much as they can get, and they really don’t have any sense of others’ needs.

Still, I keep turning over the comment I get now and again. It prompts me to ponder these words: “No, I have enough for now. Give it to someone else who needs it.”

The Letter of James blasts those who accumulate wealth for themselves and have little sense of real sharing. Listen to how Pope Francis puts it: **“Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the**

value of human life, today we also have to say ‘Thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills” (1).

In today’s Scripture James denounces those who don’t give a living wage to workers. These days there are a lot of signs looking for workers, and we might wonder why folks don’t fill these slots. In a pandemic which has killed more than 650,000 in our nation alone—many of those who were on the front lines—prospective workers may fear for their lives in many cases. Not only that, they deserve a living wage for them and their family.

Pope Francis picks up on what the Letter of James teaches today: **“The private ownership of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them, so that they can better serve the common good; for this reason, solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them” (2).**

That’s what the Letter of James is getting at, in the Pope’s words—**“to restore to the poor what belongs to them.”**

Friends: God’s Word to us from the Letter of James hits squarely to major decisions our nation—through our elected leaders—is making in this time of crisis. I learned it at Manna House: “No, I have enough for now. Give it to someone else who needs it.” May God instill in us a sense of the common good, of solidarity, as we make daily choices about having enough, and sharing the rest.

Yes, we’re in this together.

(1) Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“Joy of the Gospel”), issued November 24, 2013; article 53.

(2) *Ibid.*, article 189.

General Intercessions

September 26, 2021

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Lead us to be good stewards of all of our resources, as St. James teaches us today, using what we need, and sharing with those in need; we pray to you, O Lord—

Inspire all of us to show care in safeguarding others from the Delta variant; and give healing to all who suffer from the pandemic; we pray to you, O Lord—

Inspire and strengthen first responders, all medical workers, and fire and police personnel; we pray to you, O Lord—

Embrace with your gift of eternal life all who have died, especially Olivia King, and all who die from violence; we pray to you, O Lord—

