

20 Sunday C

August 14, 2022

St. Patrick

---

Did we really take in what Jesus says in today's Gospel? -- **“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!...I tell you, I have come to bring division.”**

**“I came to bring fire on earth!”** That's what we *don't* need. It feels as if the whole world is on fire—literally, 67 wildfires raging in *our* nation alone, with temperatures over 100 through this long summer, if not fires themselves. Enough blistering blazing! And, likewise with the divisions so deep and spiteful and raw. Enough! (1)

We've hit our limit, and then we hear Jesus—not the meek and mild Jesus, but the bold, contentious Jesus who knows the “anguish” he would soon undergo in his baptism of suffering on the cross. Yes, he's making his journey, running the race, with Calvary laying ahead of him. He's focused on where he's headed, Friends.

It's so very strange—yes, paradoxical. “Christianity is the only religion which worships the scapegoat, the one who is hated, excluded, spat upon...ridiculed, shamed,” (2) and murdered on the cross. Ours is the *only* religion which highlights and keeps ever before us the instrument of hatred—that is, the cross upon which the Savior was nailed. Not swept under the carpet; no, always before us.

Jesus' calling of suffering is prefaced today in the first reading, in which the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah spoke boldly against power, and the king's cronies lowered him deep into a cistern, sinking into the mud—alone and punished.

The author Alan Paton wrote an anti-apartheid novel entitled, Ah, but Your Land is Beautiful. In the book two activists—one black, the other white—put their lives on the line for racial justice in South Africa. When one of them cautions that they may well end up with a lot of scars on their bodies, the other says: “Well, look at it this way. When I get there, the great Judge (in heaven) will say, ‘Where are your scars?’ And if I haven't any, he will ask, ‘Were there no causes worthy of getting scars?’” (3)

Scars, indeed, on the body of the crucified Jesus. Scars, too, we're called to experience.

Her name is Helen Caldwell Day, a Black woman who was a parishioner here at St. Patrick's. In 1952, seventy years ago, Dorothy Day herself came as Helen Caldwell Day opened another house of hospitality, a day care for black children whose parents were too poor to afford daycare while they worked the cotton fields across the river. The daycare was right here on 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

Helen Caldwell Day labored totally against the tide of racism, gathering Blacks and whites together to share their Catholic faith and reflect on Catholic social teaching. Racist priests in the area complained, because she looked at the causes of what made such a nursery for poor children needed. She wasn't just about charity. She ached for justice.

He died a year ago last week, longtime St Patrick parishioner Allen Stiles. As a college student he was arrested for picketing Pink Palace because he denied entrance to Blacks. He never lost his protest fever. Oh, Allen came to daily 5:15 p.m. Mass here, taking the bus wherever he went. On Thursday afternoon, he left in our narthex his prolife protest sign which he carried in front of Planned Parenthood, together with his umbrella.

Yes, St. Patrick's has our own "cloud of witnesses" who have run the race with Jesus leading, unafraid to cause division on behalf of justice. They were on fire with passion, and they had the scars to prove it, as did our Savior Jesus who has run the race ahead of us.

St. Patrick's, *this* Sunday the question hangs over us: "Were there—are there—no causes worthy of getting scars?"

---

(1) See Mary Stommes, "The Fire in Our Belly," in *Give Us This Day: August 2022* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2022), pp. 154-55.

(2) Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I., "God as Victim"—20<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time—August 14, 2016 @www.deaconsil.com.

(3) As quoted by Mark Link, S.J., in Challenge 2000: A Daily Meditation Program on *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Allen, TX: Tabor Publishing, 1993), pg. 152.

*General Intercessions*

*20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*August 14, 2022*

**Strengthen us, the church, to persevere in keeping our focus on Jesus as we run the race of discipleship; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Uphold the prophets in our midst, who call us to conversion from violence and greed to a life of integrity; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Fashion all families into sanctuaries of your presence and joy; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Help us to protect children and youth from bullies and abusers; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Sustain all those who suffer persecution because of their faith; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give eternal life to all who have died, especially Allen Stiles at the time of the first anniversary of his death; we pray to you, O Lord--**