



Daily Reflections

August 14, 2016

Scripture

Luke 12:49-53

Jesus said to his disciples:

“I have come to set the earth on fire,
and how I wish it were already blazing!

There is a baptism with which I must be baptized,
and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!

Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth?

No, I tell you, but rather division.

From now on a household of five will be divided,
three against two and two against three;

a father will be divided against his son

and a son against his father,

a mother against her daughter

and a daughter against her mother,

a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law

and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Our Scripture Reflection

What un-soothing words the Lord proclaims to us in today's Gospel text! What do they mean for us?

Fire is a biblical metaphor for judgment. Jesus' words, His teachings are an indictment on the way life is usually lived in this world, that is, contrary to the way of the Kingdom. By baptism, the Lord is referring to the suffering and death He will endure because of His judgment of the world. It will cost Him. He underscores this point by talking about true peace versus false peace. Most people choose to live a status quo, "don't rock the boat" kind of existence even when they know something is just not right with the way they are living. Jesus tells us that in order to make everything right, true peace, division must first occur. Think about it, there are times when following Jesus' way faithfully causes conflict...at the level of the heart and even within the family. It is so much easier at times to "let the sleeping dog lie", right? But that does not bring peace. Jesus' way is the only and ultimate way to true peace. Dare we surrender to His way, despite the cost?

Food for your Journey

What killed Jesus was not irreligion, but religion itself; not lawlessness, but precisely the law; not anarchy but the upholders of order. It was not the bestial but those considered best who crucified the one in whom the divine Wisdom was visibly incarnate. And because he was not only innocent, but the very embodiment of true religion, true law and true order, this victim exposed their violence for what it was: not the defense of society but an attack against God.

--Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Fortress, 1992), 139-140.

In his book *Your God Is Too Small*, J.B. Phillips, rips into the "meek and mild" vocabulary sometimes used about Jesus: "Why 'mild'? Of all the epithets that could be applied to Christ this seems one of the least appropriate. For what does 'mild,' as applied to a person, conjure up to our minds? Surely a picture of someone who wouldn't say 'boo' to the proverbial goose; someone who would let sleeping dogs lie and avoid trouble wherever possible; someone of a placid temperament who is almost a stranger to the

passions of red-blooded humanity; someone who is a bit of a nonentity, both uninspired and uninspiring.

"This word 'mild' is apparently deliberately used to describe a man who did not hesitate to challenge and expose the hypocrisies of the religious people of his day: a man who had such 'personality' that he walked unscathed through a murderous crowd; a man so far from being a nonentity that he was regarded by the authorities as a public danger; a man who could be moved to violent anger by shameless exploitation or by smug complacent orthodoxy; a man of such courage that he deliberately walked to what he knew would mean death, despite the earnest pleas of well-meaning friends! Mild! What a word to use for a personality whose challenge and strange attractiveness nineteen centuries have by no means exhausted. Jesus Christ might well be called 'meek,' in the sense of being selfless and humble and utterly devoted to what he considered right, whatever the personal cost; but 'mild,' never!"

--J.B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (New York: Macmillan Paperbacks Edition, 1961), 27.

Agnes Bojaxhiu (Blessed Mother Teresa), who died in 1997, was one of the most influential persons of our time. She was on fire with love of Christ, and she was so passionate about her beliefs that her life became an articulate expression of her Faith. She loved life, and so she hated abortion; thus even when called to speak at the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast in Washington in the U.S. to a pre-dominantly American elite audience, she strongly criticized the policy of government-funded abortion. At the end of her speech the crowd gave Mother Teresa a standing ovation and clapped profusely. Apparently thirst overwhelmed Bill and Hillary Clinton at that very moment because while everyone else went in an uproar of applause the Clintons just sucked on their water bottles. Later when questioned, about Bill's meeting with Mother Teresa Bill's only response was, "I can not argue with a life that had been so well lived."

Prayer from the Heart

Lord Jesus, teach me Your way and guide my feet along Your path. And, if it should cost me to imitate You, may I witness to You through my pain. Amen.