

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 14th 2013

Feast of St. Matthias

I have the privilege of working with college students to struggle with and to define what agape looks like in our time. In contemplating the invitation in today's readings, I feel a personal call, an invitation to a deeper personal and communal commitment. What does it mean to love our brothers and sisters near and far as God loves us? Active, unconditional, and self-sacrificing love towards our family may come easily. Agape love towards our friends may take additional effort. Extending this same love globally takes personal relationships, reading the news, imagination, and willingness to not shrink away from the suffering.

What does it mean to love those who were killed and injured in the recent Bangladesh garment factory collapse? It is gut wrenching to imagine their suffering. What does it mean to love the owner and those who benefitted from its operation? What does justice look like in the lens of agape? Today's Gospel from John reminds us of Jesus' example. If we are to imitate him, we are to love each other and we are to consider what laying down one's own life for another truly means.

One way to live agape is through the virtue of solidarity. Solidarity calls us to "an active commitment to our neighbor and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity. This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or state, but extends progressively to all...so no one can consider himself or herself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family." -John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 51

Further explained, "[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good." -*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, no. 38.

In Robert Ellsberg's book *All Saints* Mev Puleo is called a 'witness of solidarity.' Her story of a trip to Brazil at age 14 is included in the passage about her. She remembers "riding a bus up a steep hill to view the famous statue of Christ the Redeemer that overlooks the city of Rio de Janeiro. On one side of the hill she could see the opulent homes, posh hotels, and immaculate beaches enjoyed by the rich. The view on the other side told a different story, of 'ramshackle homes, children in rags, young and old begging for our coins.'" This experience marked her for her entire life. She asked "What does it mean

to be a Christian – a follower of the way of Jesus—in a world of contradictions and conflicts?”

Mev gave her life and her talents as a photojournalist to the poor. She wanted to use her voice, her languages to tell their story and to build bridges between people. At a retreat last weekend, I was asked to share what it means to make an option for the poor in one’s life, in one’s career. It certainly means asking ourselves: Who gets my time? Who benefits from my resources? How do I vote?

These are important questions to wrestle with and to live deeper into each day. It is our call. I am not sure it comes close to asking this deeper question. How do we love others as God loves us? What would it mean to lay our own lives down for our friends?

Today is the feast day of Saint Matthias. How do we share in the “luck” of Saint Matthias who joined the apostles after casting lots? If we imagine ourselves in Matthias’ place, our spot opening up to join the apostles, just after Jesus’ crucifixion. What would our ministry be? How would we live our lives? What can we do today to bring our lives more in congruency with our call?

Fall in Love

Attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ (1907–1991)

Nothing is more practical than
finding God, than
falling in Love
in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.
It will decide
what will get you out of bed in the morning,

what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in Love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.

From Finding God in All Things: A Marquette Prayer Book

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