

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jul 19th 2016

They were dark, very dark nights sitting alone under the African sky. My faithful guardian owl was perched up on the tree, and the stars, well...hard to put words to it! Here I am a small part of this overwhelming universe in this land where the earliest form of human life was found. Alone? No. Here was I, and a part of God's whole of creation. A sister to "Ardi" and "Lucy" who lived here on the African continent 4.4 million years and 2.8 million years ago! How old am I? How old are you? Who are my sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers?

This past week, a remake of Alex Haley's book, *Roots*, was on television. I hadn't seen it the first time it was presented as I was off in some remote area that did not have the TV channel it was cast. Generations of one family named Kinte, beginning from a small village in Africa was followed with all the horrors of slavery, but with the faith and memory of their "roots" that kept them alive with the strength to endure their lives from slave trade, to freedom. I wept with what was presented and could not imagine what might happen next to this family! Then I sobbed when it ended! "Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance..."

Obviously I never read the book, but grateful to have entered into this story over the past 4 days. Who are my sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers?

Recently I went on an immersion trip with the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice into North Omaha with a group of folks from Creighton University to learn of the history of the African American families that traveled to Omaha, NE seeking work and a life for their families. Within the context of their history, we hear of their struggles of racial prejudices, and violence that grew stronger especially following WWII and through the Civil Rights movement. Today, the area is considered a "food desert" without any market for fresh food. Then, too, we experienced the culture, arts and initiatives that showed evidences of hope and good works happening in this neighborhood--revitalizing lives with people working together to build a better future. Who are my sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers?

Teilhard de Chardin, SJ emphasized that cosmic energy is love, and that God, Christ Jesus, who is love, loved us all into being. In Christ, we are all sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers to each other. Our DNA lines go far and deep into a spiritual reality telling us that we are all related. Quantum physics and new scientific research may even tell us that this is true within our physical reality..."the flock of Your inheritance."

Praying with these readings and reflecting on my life and the history of so many peoples, it is obvious we have not been the most loving and have neglected to see the dignity, beauty and godliness of our sister, brothers, mothers and fathers. Jesus reminds us that whoever does the will of His Father, God, is a sister, brother and mother to him. God's will is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Yes, we have fallen short and we can pray as the psalmist prayed: Lord, show us your mercy and love.

God is Mercy. This mercy is divine and happens with God's own initiative. It is the loving presence of God that bridges the divine with the human experience and gives life, renewed life. Never let us forget to pray for this Mercy so we can be a bridge-builder among peoples and live together as sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers. May our eyes be opened to God's Mercy among us and never let us forget our roots, in Christ Jesus.

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