

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 21st 2016

Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist

I have the honor of writing the reflection for today, September 21st, which has been selected by the United Nations Organization as the International World Day of Peace. In order to prepare to celebrate this day students, staff and faculty here at Creighton University have gathered in groups to fold origami cranes in an effort to create 1000 paper cranes to display on campus to encourage all to pray for peace in our world. Praying for peace is so important that the Catholic Church has established January 1st as the Annual World Day of Peace.

I am not good at folding origami paper.

I also struggle with creating peace in my life let alone the world.

Before I reveal the wonderful inspiration for peace that the scriptures give us today let me share the brief story of how the origami crane peace movement came about from one of the most horrific acts of war humans have experienced.

The ancient Japanese tradition of a wish or a gift of healing being granted to the person who folds 1000 cranes was revitalized by a young girl by the name of Sadako Sasaki. Sadako survived the Hiroshima bomb when she was only two years old, but was diagnosed with Leukemia at the age of 12 and died within the year. Sadako set out to fold 1000 cranes to express her wish for healing and peace but died before she finished. Her family finished the rest and in 2007 the organization called "Sadako Legacy" began donating Sadako's paper cranes around the world to places in need of healing.

The US has our own places in need of healing. Thousands of cranes had been left at Ground Zero after the Twin Towers came down on September 11th 2001. In 2010, Sadako's brother gave Clifton Truman Daniel, the grandson of U.S. President Harry S. Truman, (who ordered the 1945 atomic bombings) the last crane Sadako ever folded. He placed it in Daniel's hand and asked him if he would help them send a message of peace.

In the Gospel from today when we read about Jesus calling Matthew the tax collector we hear the words, "Follow me" (Mt. 9:9). In this passage Jesus refers to himself as the physician sent to be with sinners. He was the physician of peace and healing and he called Matthew and continues to call us today to follow him. I can only imagine that 12 year old Sadako simply wanted peace and healing when she began folding her cranes.

So what does it look like for me and you to follow Jesus who are living today in this world that still lacks peace? In today's First Reading from Ephesians, St. Paul gives the instructions on how to answer Jesus' call to "Follow me". St. Paul instructs us on how to not just fold paper cranes with our fingers but to fold paper cranes with our heart. He said, "live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:2).

Crane

I revealed at the beginning of this reflection that I am not very skilled at folding origami cranes. But I did practice and created a pretty decent looking crane eventually. I also revealed at the beginning of this reflection that I struggle finding peace. Yet, as I practice living out my vocation of wife, mother, co-worker and friend with humility, gentleness, patience and love. I find that I am able to truly follow Jesus and provide opportunities for the physician of peace and healing to be felt in our world.

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