

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Aug 20th 2017

This Sunday's readings happen to resonate with two themes in my work at Creighton at this time of year: interfaith work and preparations to welcome new students to campus.

At our Welcome Week Mass this weekend, we will have had about 1,000 incoming students and their families listening together to these readings. Coming from various regions of the USA and the international community, they will hear, "For my house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples," and "O God, let all the nations praise your name!" and "that [God] may have mercy on all." They will celebrate with a unique community, sharing an emotional moment of blessing parents and children as they part. It is a beautiful microcosm of the wider Church, gathered together in the same physical space only for an hour to pray together.

I also help to with Creighton's annual Interfaith Prayer Service. I am currently at an interfaith conference with the group of students who will prepare the prayer service and other interfaith events this year. I will put aside for now the difficulty in reconciling the Sunday readings with the themes that have come up at the conference: evangelization vs. pluralism, and conversion vs. conversation. One thing that has risen for me, however, is that most of my interfaith conversations happened precisely because I have deep roots in my faith and because I practice it visibly. Curious people over the last decade have asked me about my Catholic faith because they know I am "into it," not because I am trying to tell them about it all the time. A fruitful interfaith conversation often ends with both people feeling respected, stronger in their own traditions, and more appreciative of the other. I hope that our students find our campus to be a "house of prayer for all peoples," where they feel safe to engage and nourish their own spirituality and their classmates'.

Molly Mattingly-Creighton University's Campus Ministry and St. John's Parish