

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Feb 9th 2018

Far too many of God's children will die unnecessarily today. What can I do about that? I do not have the power or the authority to end the bloodshed in the Sudan or El Salvador or so many other countries. If we look at all the violence and disease and poverty in today's world, it is overwhelming.

In today's readings, Jesus isn't saying, "You alone can solve all the world's problems." Jesus is just calling me to "be open." So, while I cannot end the countless wars that are raging, there are small things I can do. For instance, I can contact my elected representatives about issues they can do something about or refuse to buy products that use child labor or harm the environment. We do not have to do it all, we just have to do our part.

When I was in graduate school, a mentor gave me a poster that read: "Always hold firmly to the thought that each one of us can do something to bring some portion of human misery to an end." That has been one of the guiding stars of my life.

Another has been my Nanny Marie (my mom's mom) who grew up as an orphan. She worked at Phillips Department Store for many years. One time my mother dropped me off when I was 5 or 6 years old, since I was going to stay overnight with her. As Nanny Marie was not able to leave yet, she sent me to Phillips' bakery with a nickel to keep me occupied.

When the baker asked me who I belonged to, I told her Nanny Marie. She then picked me up and brought me behind the counter. She instructed me to pick out any three things I wanted. One donut was a big treat back then, but three was heaven! When I tried to give the baker my nickel, she refused to take it. This was her way of giving back to a woman who had helped her and so many others.

Later that night when I asked my Nanny Marie about all those people she had helped, she shushed me and told me that it's just what people do for each other. She didn't see the need to talk about the countless people she had helped whether hard times. My Nanny Marie was "open" to seeing her neighbor in need and willing to step up to doing something about it.

Returning to today's readings, how is Jesus calling me to "be open" today? What piece of misery can I address in my dealings with the people I will encounter? I don't know what today will bring, but I will try to remember to "be open" so I can be like my Nanny Marie and bring "some portion of human misery to an end."

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