

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C – July 14, 2013

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Reflections inspired by **Deut. 30:10-14, Col. 1:15-20, and Lk. 10:25-37**

“Make Music, Not War”

This evening we are reminded in our first reading that “the word of God is very near to you; it is in your mouth, and in your heart, so that you can keep it.” If the word of God is in your heart, how do you access it? What tools or spiritual practices do you use to hear the word of God in your heart and to respond from your heart?

Many people have turned to some type of contemplative practice of deep listening to hear the word of God in their hearts. They use yoga practices, or some type of physical exercise to open sources of energy that block our capacity to hear on deep levels. Others turn to some meditative practices that move one beyond the ordinary levels of awareness to a spiritual level of awareness and eventually to that place of unitive consciousness where one feels the oneness with all sentient beings and with life itself.

Once an individual has experienced a deeper level of consciousness or a momentary feeling of oneness, then what? Do we seek these types of experiences for our own purposes? For our own enlightenment? For our own satisfaction?

Let’s take a look at our Gospel reading and see what Jesus invites us to do with our lives once we have discovered how to listen deeply to the word of God in our hearts. He tells his listeners a parable in which the Lucan Jesus invites us to find the presence of God in one another. It is a parable that is very familiar to us. It is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

What exactly is a parable? Thomas Keating describes a parable as “a lens on the everyday, exposing the presence of God where we dare not expect it, where we have been trained to ignore it.” This is quite different from thinking of parables as simple stories for simple people. No, Jesus is the artist of the soul, and Jesus responds as an artist in creating parables that continue to generate insights into the most profound issues of life.

In the parable given us this evening, we are challenged to view Jesus’ invitation to inclusivity. By choosing the Samaritan as the “hero” of this story, Jesus is confronting us to challenge our own attitudes towards our enemies or those we consider “less” than ourselves because of their cultural backgrounds or “clan” or “tribal” mentalities. Jesus does not give us long discourses on how to love our enemies—rather, he tells us a story and invites us to become like what we hear and understand. I want to share with you this evening what happened in my soul and in my visioning as I reflected on this parable and celebrated the fourth of July.

A while back, Jeannette and I had purchased tickets to attend a concert with Josh Grobin at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles on the 4th of July. Of course, the lure of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and a promise of a spectacular fireworks display were also very tempting. The first part of the concert featured our country’s patriotic favorites with the traditional salute to our Veterans by playing each of our armed services themes

and asking Veterans from each of these branches to stand and be acknowledged. After a short break, Josh Grobin came out and began a spectacular concert in which he acknowledged in his music peoples of varying cultures and ethnicities. He mentioned how he felt his selection reflected the tapestry of our country.

A couple of nights after this event, I was in that liminal space between wakefulness and sleep and I had a vision in which I imagined a world symphony playing all the national anthems of differing countries. Many, many people from all over the world had gathered for this performance. When the national anthem of a particular country was being played, those who came from that country or whose ancestors had originated in that country were asked to stand and be recognized. Everyone applauded all those who stood. It was a profound imagination in which I witnessed what music can do to bring the world to a sense of oneness.

And then I went back to reflecting on the parable of the Good Samaritan and realized that Jesus in telling this story provided an action for the hero to perform. Instead of criticizing the Samaritans, he made a Samaritan the star of the story. I thought to myself: what would happen if instead of harboring anger, mistrust, and alienation toward our perceived enemies, we would sit at a concert together listening to one another's national anthems being weaved into an incredible symphony, even while the music was being directed by our perceived enemy? How would our souls and our spirits resonate to the experience?

And then I thought of Joe White who began a project called "A Year Without War." He is using the social media to send his mes-

sage out throughout the world, asking everyone to image our world free of war for one full year—the year 2020. You can learn more at his website, called AYearWithoutWar.org.

And then I imagined that perhaps the "world symphony" could travel throughout the world in the year 2020 playing the music of all the countries of the world. Instead of waging war, we could make music together, enjoy peace, and get to know all the various cultures and traditions of the world.

A dream? Perhaps! But take a look at Joe's website and decide for yourself if Joe is just a dreamer or if he is on to something. On this website Joe says that war was outlawed in 1928 through the Kellogg-Briand Pact and it was the spiritual community which played such a crucial role. "Now," he says, "we have the means to globally celebrate a growing support base from the spiritual communities on earth."

The primary goal at this time is getting to the United Nations General Assembly by 2015 with a petition to globally recognize, celebrate, and secure additional signatures to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. If you would like to be a part of this process, go to the website for "A Year Without War" and sign the petition. Joe observes that "our grandparents were more radical than we are."

As the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures did long ago, now is *our* time to dream and to vision. Unless we begin dreaming, we will not see much change in our warring world. I believe Jesus' parables are invitations to think outside the box. I challenge each one of you to begin to think outside the box as you imagine what the "reign of God" could look like.

For me, it is an invitation to make music, not war!