

January 24, 2016 – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Nehemiah 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; First Corinthians 12:12-30; Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

A few hours ago I was just beginning to sit down and write my reflection for this Sunday's reading when the phone rang. I answered the phone and immediately into the conversation I knew that the person on the other end was very emotionally upset and crying. All she could say to me was, "I am quitting, I really want to quit..." It took a few minutes for her to calm down enough to tell me that she was quitting her job. She had just been in a work related meeting and different tasks and jobs were assigned and she was completely ignored. She said: "I cannot work in place where people do not respect me and where I am not noticed."

Isn't this so much a part of our everyday reality? I have and maybe you have felt unnoticed or not respected at times in your life. We live in a world where we can easily encounter many people that we ourselves don't notice or respect. They may be the poor the marginalized, those who have a different faith, different views or life style. It is so easy to dismiss them because they are not like us!

In Nepal, where I live as a Maryknoll missionary, so many young people are trafficked out of the country for prostitution and for labor. They are not respected for whom and what they are but only for what services they can provide and that is only for limited time and then they are discarded.

But not only do we not respect individuals but also the environment. Nepal as one of the least developed nations is bearing the heavy burden of climate change despite its negligible contribution to greenhouse gas emissions as well as low consumption of ODS (ozone-depleting substances).

The Himalayan snows are melting at an accelerated pace thus endangering the water supply for millions of people Asia. So where is the respect for the environment and for all those who are suffering now and will surely be suffering more in the near future?

Do we really care enough about one another to ask the critical questions, to address the "elephant in the room" or do we just ignore the other and assume that our non-response is a valid response whereas we should be recognizing it as our lack of respect for the welfare and dignity of the other.

In the first reading Ezra calls the people together, the men and women and all children, and they come to know and understand and this coming together takes away the sadness. Isn't it time we followed his example and called together not only our friends and relatives but others in our work place and home communities? Let those in decision-making positions, the policy makers, also come together and be respectful of one another and be not so quick to dismiss the other. Let us see who among us feels disrespected and marginalized and listen to them so that we can know and understand and take away their sadness. Let us have the conversation on respect for one another and for the world in which we live and let us come to realize that without respecting the other there will be no peace!

Ezra was the one to do this and maybe today we are the ones to do it. Ezra read and the people listened and all came to understand. I think that with this understanding came a great sense of responsibility towards one another and the world in which they lived so that Ezra could now say to those assembled, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine" for now indeed we are community and committed to helping one another and the Lord is with us.

In the second reading we know that all have been blessed with gifts by God for the common good of the Church and for us all. Can we be respectful of the gifts that are given to our brothers and sisters?

The words of Jesus in the Gospel ring so true for all of us today and we pray that we can hold these words close to our hearts. We seek forgiveness for the times we have failed to be respectful of one another and the environment and we pray that by asking this forgiveness we and all will be empowered to live in freedom and dignity so that the fullness of God's love and compassion will be known by all of God's creation. When individually we do this each one of us will then be fully involved in the mission of Jesus for we to will be anointed and commissioned to bring the Good News to all.