

Gospel Reflection on Mark 6:30-34
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 19th July 15'

Our world today can seem to be a frightening place and becoming more so. There are wars and threats of wars causing great instability and uncertainty. We see poverty, injustice and human rights abuses taking place all around us and at our own back doors. We see the acceleration of greed and economic advantage of the few above the needs of us all. We see the dignity of many stripped through various addictions. We experience increasing religious and political intolerance. Fear is being exploited for political gain. The prophetic voices tend to be wiped out as fear rampages through a world that seems to be losing control of its sanity. In the despair and helplessness we could well conclude that we are in the grip of a worldwide psychotic episode.

And yet something is not right with this analysis because most of us if not all of us encounter little (or big) acts of Love every day however small or seemingly insignificant. We know and meet good and beautiful people that come into our lives even if sometimes we take them for granted and don't always notice the deeper acts of Love that happen around us and within us. But Love is there and it is all around us when we open our eyes to see. So why then do we so often allow ourselves to be crippled and manipulated by fear? Why do we focus on what is often the illusion of fear at the expense of the reality of Love around us and living within us?

The apostles (representative of all of us who proclaim to *follow* Jesus) last week were *sent* out by Jesus to the people. This week they return to *tell him all they had done and taught*. Their authenticity had obviously captured the hearts of the people and had awakened them to something in the midst of their own hardships, struggles and fears. The apostles' belief in Jesus and their response to that belief had awakened a hunger in the hearts of the people they encountered, even though the apostles at this stage were very limited in the depth of their own understanding of who Jesus really was. However, what the apostles had experienced of Jesus was enough to *send* them out and so much so we are told *that from every town the people all hurried to the place on foot* where they knew the apostles and Jesus were going. We sense this great urgency and a great hunger awakening in the people. *Jesus takes pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he set himself to teach them..* How heart wrenching this is. This same hunger and urgency is very much with us today but where are the *shepherds*? Jesus says to each of us who *believe* in him that we are the *shepherds*. Jesus is *sending* us – we are the hands and feet and the Heart of Jesus in and for our world. Do we believe this?

Wayne Teasdale in his book *The Mystic Heart* says there are *nine elements* in a *global or universal spirituality or mysticism* or what he further calls *interspirituality*. And it is this *global mysticism* (listening from within) that hungers to be awakened in our weeping and bewildered world. The *shepherds* are continually being *taught* and instructed by this Spirit of Love and these *nine elements* are core to how and what the Spirit teaches the listening Heart. I offer them in very condensed form. Ponder them slowly and deeply and listen to what it is that this Spirit is wanting to awaken in you:

ELEMENT 1. **Actual Moral Capacity:** *a person in touch with compassion, love and mercy, is kind and other centred....*

ELEMENT 2. **Solidarity with all Living Beings:** *a deep realization of the interconnectedness of everyone and everything.*

ELEMENT 3. **Deep Nonviolence:** *a natural, organic evolution into deep nonviolence: the attitude and practice of non-harming.*

ELEMENT 4 **Humility:** *humility of heart keeps us honest, cutting away self-deception, falsehood, and inauthenticity. It forces us to be real even when it is uncomfortable.*

ELEMENT 5. **Spiritual Practice:** *the work of our transformation, is the means of inner growth and change toward human maturity...a daily spiritual practice is the "technology" of inner change. Without it, such change is inconceivable.*

ELEMENT 6. **Mature Self-Knowledge:** *to be radically open to acknowledging our faults and limitations... humility is the basis of an honest, mature self-awareness that accepts ourselves as we are, without covering up, making excuses, or blaming others.*

ELEMENT 7. **Simplicity of Life:** *this concerns our relationship with the planet, the natural world, other species, and other human beings. As we grow in mystical consciousness and become inwardly integrated, our life naturally becomes simplified, uncluttered by property and money.*

ELEMENT 8. **Selfless Service and Compassionate Action:** *Given the enormous suffering among the poor and oppressed, the ecological degradation of the earth and threats to world peace and stability, men and women of spiritual wisdom must make a positive contribution.*

ELEMENT 9. **The Prophetic Voice:** *is the awakened and an utterly necessary function of leadership in the area of justice..... it is witness and responseand accepting our universal responsibility.*

The *Mystic Heart* within each of us calls us to *come away and rest for a while* in and with this Universal Spirit. The voice of that Spirit within is *teaching* us and Loving us into Life itself. Giving into fear is about the destruction of our Heart. Opening into the Mystery of Love within is about the awakening of our Heart. Our world is crying out to be awakened from within. *Will we listen to the voice of the Spirit? Will we allow ourselves to be truly known by Jesus? Will we then follow Jesus? Adaptation of Jn 10:27*
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