

June 22, 2008 – 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time
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Jeremiah 20:10-13	Jeremiah unburdens his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God's word, but in return received only persecution and sorrow. Yet, when, in fear, he withheld God's message, it became as a burning fire in his bones that could not be contained.
Psalm: 69: 8-10, 14, 17, 33-35	The Psalmist continues the theme of the oppressed crying out to God for deliverance, but still trusts that God will save Her people and lead all, in time, into the promised land.
Romans 5: 12-15	St. Paul contrasts sin and death inflicted upon humankind through Adam's disobedience, with Jesus' triumph over sin and death through His glorious death and resurrection. In Jesus, we have become a new creation.
Matthew:10: 26-33	"Fear not those who threaten you; in time all will be revealed. What I tell you now, shout from the rooftops for all to hear."

As we look out upon our world, we applaud the countless efforts that have been made to realize the truth that indeed we are one family, reaching across international borders, responsible for the well-being of each other. These efforts move us closer toward world peace and the desired equality for all. We note with deep gratitude both men and women who have fearlessly proclaimed, among hostile groups, the message of Jesus, and, in turn, have given their lives in the cause of peace and justice; they indeed have internalized and witnessed that, "It is unfitting, for followers of Jesus, to be delicate members under a thorn-crowned Head."

Maryknoll missionaries, throughout the years, have tried to carry the mandate of Jesus to serve the poor, to heal and comfort the suffering, into the troubled areas of our world. As missionaries we strive to love our neighbors in this shrinking world.

One war torn country where our missionaries have served has been southern Sudan, where for some 21 years civil war has been the reality. The sufferings of the people have been intense; lives have been lost, homes destroyed, and the inherent dignity of men, women and children has been violated in ways unspeakable.

During these years of conflict in southern Sudan, Maryknoll missionaries accompanied God's people, offering shelters for the nomads, administering to the sick, teaching the little ones, until they themselves were expelled from the country. Not unlike Jeremiah, they found it hard to not carry forward God's mission; so undaunted, when it was again possible, the missionaries returned to be with the people.

A mission station was set up in the rural area of Chukudum, thought to be free of bombings and gunfire. Within months, however, this place also became a "killing field." In spite of the attack and their own suffering the missionaries continued their work and stayed with the people of Chukudum as long as they could.

The next and last mission site in southern Sudan was Nanyangachor deep in the land of the Toposa ethnic group. For eight years, Sisters Mary Ellen Manz and Joan Sauvigne lived, worked, and addressed the immediate needs of the people. Seeing the need for future hope for the youth, through education, Mary Ellen started a primary school, the first ever in this area. In November 2007, the first graduating class consisted of 11 students, all taking their first step toward a more hopeful future. Sister Joan, through her new health center, continued to heal the physical and mental wounds brought on through the horrific years of war which at one point in recent history was thought of as the norm or the only reality for this tribal people.

Saint Paul reminds us that through Jesus' death and resurrection we have become a new creation. New possibilities for peace and security are available when people's basic needs are met, when neighbors love one another as Jesus taught and the missionaries and martyrs have done before us. This way is often not the way the world has known; in far too many cases violence has become the norm, but it is our mission to speak God's word and to proclaim how God has "rescued the poor" and provides for all a new reality where peace and justice reign.

All the readings today speak of fear, but fear is not the last word. Jesus' followers are asked "to not be afraid;" "[w]hat you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops." Many are afraid to go against the grain, to speak of a new creation – a new reality where peace is possible. The prophet Jeremiah, fearing rejection and scorn, tries to remain silent, but finds the power of the "Word" is as a fire within, compelling him to speak the truth. Let us speak the truth of peace and love in this world in the face of violence and inequality.

For more information:

Exercise your power to choose leaders who will not be afraid to speak the truth and who will seek to create a world without violence. Read more about the global impact of U.S. political and economic decisions in "Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world," a resource developed by Maryknoll missionaries who witness the global impact of U.S. political and economic decisions. Through this resource, Maryknoll missionaries encourage voters in the 2008 elections to scrutinize candidates' policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, lack basic necessities, endure the scourge of racism, live with gender-based discrimination or feel the immediate impact of climate change.

Email for a copy, or find the election guide here:
www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm

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