

On Line and On Point

MARY MOTHER OF JESUS INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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LISTEN—Indeed, today too there is no shortage of preachers who, especially through the new means of communication, can disturb communities. They present themselves not primarily to announce the Gospel of God who loves [us] in Jesus, Crucified and Risen, but to insist, as true “keepers of the truth”—so they call themselves—on the best way to be Christians. And they strongly affirm that the true Christianity is the one they adhere to, often identified with certain forms of the past, and that the solution to the crises of today is to go back so as not to lose the genuineness of the faith. Today too, as then, there is a temptation to close oneself up in some of the certainties acquired in past traditions. But how can we recognize these people?

For example, one of the traces of this way of proceeding is inflexibility. Faced with the preaching of the Gospel that makes us free, that makes us joyful, these people are rigid. Always the rigidity: You must do this, you must do that... Inflexibility is typical of these people. Following the teaching of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians will help us to understand which path to follow. The path indicated by the Apostle is the liberating and ever-new path of Jesus, Crucified and Risen; it is the path of proclamation, which is achieved through humility and fraternity—the new preachers do not know what humility is, what fraternity is. It is the path of meek and obedient trust—the new preachers know neither meekness nor obedience. And this meek and obedient way

leads forward in the certainty that the Holy Spirit works in the Church in every age. Ultimately, faith in the Holy Spirit present in the Church carries us forward and will save us.—*Francis, June 2021*

OFFERINGS—We are grateful for your continued contribution toward the growth and development of our community. Thank you. Please remember to make your regular donations to MMOJ by sending your check to MMOJ % St. Andrew UCC, 6908 Beneva Road, Sarasota. FL 34238. Again, tabulation of offerings and donations will be announced when they are received at St Andrew UCC. Remember: MMOJ continues to donate 5% of all offerings received each month to Outreach, and will continue to focus on current food and hunger issues of our surrounding communities.



THANK YOU— You and other BREAD FOR THE WORLD members have helped to get emergency relief to those households most in need. [You] have also

supported efforts to increase our nation’s leadership in the global effort to prevent hunger and malnutrition. Bread grassroots leaders and teams contacted their members of Congress [we did by letters], especially Republican members who previously expressed support for global nutrition.

As a result, a bipartisan group of 135 lawmakers signed on a letter [sponsored by U.S. Reps. Jim McGovern, a Democrat, and Brian Fitzpatrick, a Republican] calling for \$300 million for global nutrition in the government’s fiscal year 2022 budget. This would double the current amount of funding for global nutrition.

Yet, [both home and abroad] we are still in a hunger crisis. In the months ahead, Bread for the World members can play a critical role in urging Congress to expand funding for child nutrition

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community Mission Statement

We are a Christ-centered community of equals, consisting of women and men, ordained and non-ordained, empowered by the Spirit whose mission is to worship, to serve, to promote compassion, justice and care for creation. Come join us.

Send articles/info by Wed to be published on weekend: rjbannerusa@gmail.com

both in our own country and abroad.—BREAD FOR THE WORLD [Note: If you did not receive your working papers for sending out three more letters to our congressional people, let me know at email address below—or act now by calling 800-826-3688 or visit bread.org/act to take action today.]—*Bread for the World Newsletter*

OUTREACH—The current recipient of our offered financial support continues to be All Faiths Food Bank of Sarasota [AFFB]. All Faiths Food Bank is a member of Feeding America – a network of food banks across the country. One of its key objectives is to equitably serve agency partners who distribute food to those struggling with hunger. All Faiths understands that hunger is a health issue and its mission is, “Together with our partners, we provide healthy solutions to end hunger in our community.”

QUOTE—“Our challenge today is to trust the power of love at the heart of life, to let ourselves be seized by love, to create and invent ways for love to evolve into a global wholeness of unity, compassion, justice, and peacemaking.” —*Ilia Delio*



TRUSTING OUR INNER AUTHORITY—The two wheels of Scripture and Tradition can be seen as sources of outer authority, while our personal experience leads to our inner authority. I am convinced we need and can have both. Only when inner and outer authority come together do we have true spiritual wisdom. Christianity in most of its history has largely relied upon outer authority. But we must now be honest about the value of inner experience, which of course was at work all the time but was not given credence. Information from outer authority is not necessarily transformation, and we need genuinely transformed people today, not just people with answers. I do not want my words in these meditations to separate anyone from their own astonishment or to provide them with a substitute

for their own inner experience. Theology (and authority figures) have done that for too many. Rather, I hope my words—written or spoken—simply invite readers on their own inner journey rather than become a replacement for it. I am increasingly convinced that the word prayer, which has become a functional and pious thing for believers to do, was meant to be a descriptor and an invitation to inner experience. When spiritual teachers invite us to “pray,” they are in effect saying, “Go inside and know for yourself!”

Father Thomas Keating (1923–2018) wrote: “The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separated from [God]. If we get rid of that thought, our troubles will be greatly reduced. We fail to believe that we are always with God and that [God] is part of every reality. The present moment, every object we see, our inmost nature are all rooted in [God]. But we hesitate to believe this until our personal experience gives us the confidence to believe in it. . . . God constantly speaks to us through each other as well as from within. The interior experience of God’s presence activates our capacity to perceive [the divine] in everything else—in people, in events, in nature. We may enjoy union with God in any experience of the external senses as well as in prayer.”

This is a foundational belief of the ministry of spiritual direction: everyone has access to an inner experience of God, but we don’t always recognize those experiences for what they are. We may be too busy, too bored with our church services, or too “bought in” to the narratives of our consumer culture. A practice of slowing down, of reflection, of asking “big questions” about our desires, our wounds, our values, and our relationships helps us to discover and trust in the truth and authority that lies within us.

As the wise Joan Chittister points out, “Spiritual direction, ‘holy friendship,’ can be found in every great spiritual tradition. But the purpose is not to attach us to someone wiser than ourselves—the guru, the great guide, the spiritual master, the bodhisattva, the saint. The purpose of spiritual direction is to enable us to become holy ourselves.”—Richard Rohr

NEW DIRECTION—Starting next week and at the request of Maryal, we will pursue the subject of **Restorative Justice**. This is a hot button issue for the Christian Community, particularly our own. Let me lead and guide you through the maze of information available, and hopefully find our way to practicality as well. Watch for it! **NEXT WEEK:**

INTRODUCTION TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE