

HOMILY – A Vigil for children taken from their families at the border

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“Jesus said, ‘For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me . . .’

May it be so with us, In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This evening, we gather to pray for those who have been mistreated even as they sought refuge at our borders, and especially for families whose children have been forcibly removed from their parents; we also seek God’s forgiveness that this has happened in our name as Americans.

We, as people of faith, face increasingly stark choices in these challenging times. It seems that in many respects, we have lost our way and either abandoned or corrupted our very identity.

But, in the midst of this crisis, I see hope, and I am not alone. Look at the number gathered here tonight, and for Christians across our country who are rising up. Look at the courageous leaders who put out the Reclaiming Jesus manifesto a few weeks ago. In truth, challenging times can help clarify one’s vision and help us put an end to the self-deceptions around who we think we are and the kind of country we have allowed ourselves to become.

This kind of work requires a clear moral compass by which to orientate ourselves, and we find it in the person of Jesus Christ.

When we turn from the ways of the world and follow Jesus, we are freed from the isolating fear of thinking about life as us against them. Our eyes are opened to the beauty of diversity in a world of abundance, where there is enough for all.

Today’s Gospel reading says that if we are to be faithful Christians then we must do this to the least of these, even at the cost of our own suffering, because that is exactly how God acts toward us.

Richard Rohr writes, “Only by solidarity with other people’s suffering can comfortable people be converted. Otherwise we are disconnected from the cross —and . . . our own necessary participation in the great mystery of dying and rising.” You see, it is Jesus, who becomes the least of these, and so opens our eyes to see that the welfare of the other, is linked to our own.

For us who have known little hardship, it is may be difficult to see. So, God calls us to look for Jesus in places we least expect.

Admittedly, this is a risky business, but the Spirit will lead us as we follow Jesus into the difficult places where humanity is most at risk, disfigured and needy. And if we take the time and effort to truly listen to and to see the other with equal regard and reverence, we will come to realize that God is nearer than we could imagine.

You see, as we follow Jesus, we are enabled to see that God accepts us as if we had already reached our potential and were living as the human beings that he created us to be. As we reach out into new neighborhoods, Jesus goes before us and creates the opportunity for fellowship, even among strangers. In this, we are being saved into a beloved community that truly cares for the common good – into the family of God.

And so now we have come full circle.

"The ultimate test of a moral society", wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."

Now, is the time to stand firm, in the power of the Spirit, let us bear witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and together work for a nation where all of God's children can live with dignity in hope and peace.

Amen