

+ Maria

September 11, 2014 – Mass for the Preservation of Justice and Peace

My sisters in Christ and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel – Forever now, it seems, Americans and all people of conscience will remember the sad events of September 11, 2001. So many lost lives, so many lost dreams, so many lost loves. So many families still affected by the terrorism of that day. So much valor shown as well, by people who wouldn't sit back but gave their lives to stop Flight 93, or by first responders who died being faithful to their call to protect and to defend. We know that God above hears the prayers, the heartaches, and the hopes of so many today, and we join our prayers to theirs. God give rest to those who died. God give peace to those who mourn. God continue to inspire the leaders of nations and people of good will to pray for and work for peace. May evil be seen for what it is and be confronted firmly. May justice reign and the roots of terrorism and violence be healed. May God help his children to live at peace with one another, and to have that peace which is the fruit of justice.

Given the President's speech last evening and what we know is going on in today's world, we realize that the same issues present thirteen years ago continue to simmer and boil. This is the world that the good Lord expects us to live in and navigate. It's of no use to wish that everything were different. As our forebears struggled with the troubles in the countries from which they emigrated, and our parents and grandparents endured and overcame the trials of the Depression and World War II, it is our time to stand firm in faith, pray and do what we can do to make our world a more just and peaceful place.

In light of this reality, we must hear and absorb today's gospel, for we are men and women of the Word. The Word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, has left us His words, and the truth of the gospel is often unsettling. Jesus' first words today are, "To you who hear me I say." This is a dramatic statement, and seems to acknowledge that there are some who don't or can't or won't listen to Jesus, or that Jesus has to pierce through to get our attention. We must be listeners. Are we poised to listen? The constant striving of the Carmelite for purity of heart, means a constant quest for us to be open to listen, to silence our inner parent, our superego, our pride, in order to be able to listen to ourselves, others and God. "To you who hear me I say..." Jesus continues now with those famous lines, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." The rest of the passage provides a commentary on that teaching and examples of how to do so. What a list! Turn the other cheek; if they take your cloak, give them your tunic; give to everyone who asks; even sinners love those who love them; do to others as you would have them do to you; lend money without expecting repayment; love your enemies; do not judge; do not condemn; forgive and you will be forgiven; give and gifts will be given to you to overflowing."

These words are why Christians have to, must, try to, aspire to, and aim at looking at life in a different way and acting differently. St. Teresa of Avila taught that the constant source of our meditation should be the passion of Christ. Why? Because in Christ's rejection, abuse, sufferings, and death, we can see the entire weight of the evil world thrust upon him, who was absolutely innocent. And, we can see how he forgave, turned the other cheek, didn't seek revenge, continued to care for others, and gave without anger until his last drop of blood was poured out in death. If you want to see how this works, the next time you are really angry or disappointed, sit down for five minutes and think about Jesus at the agony in the garden. Or falling the third time. Or being mocked. Or being nailed to the cross. Who on the face of the earth had more of a human right to be angry and strike back than Jesus did? But he didn't. Put your own troubles in that situation and watch how Jesus acted, and I can assure you that you will walk away having lost your anger, your right to be insulted or get even, or even to go and sulk. Jesus modeled perfectly his teaching found in today's gospel and bringing ourselves into it, we can begin to live that teaching in our own lives.

So, my Sisters, our world is fragile, hurting, violent, and people intent on doing evil and having their way about. We who believe pay attention to all this. We must, and we must pray, particularly for healing and for a change in the human heart. But we also, having had ears to hear, must bring the word and witness of Jesus forward as our response. We advocate peace, justice, reconciliation; we stand up for life, for restorative measures to help solve resolve problems, for dialogue and for forgiveness. Our response to today's troubles must rise about politics to principles, to emphasize people over power. We have to try, again from the core of our relationship with God, to bring the eyes and hands and heart of Jesus Himself into every situation by being ourselves, personally, believable believers. We do not lose hope. We do not despair, for our wonderful Lord is the victor over sin and death once and for all.

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