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THE LINE

Newsletter of the Convocation Of The West
OF THE MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF ALL SAINTS



FROM BATTLE AND MURDER, GOOD LORD DELIVER US

By The Right Rev. Winfield Mott

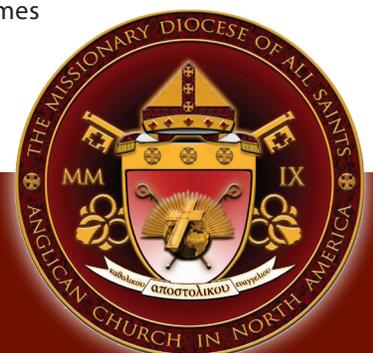
So pleads the Litany (1928 BCP), with the 2019 BCP adding violence.

It is obviously not a new problem. The roots can be traced all the way back to Cain and Abel. To study history is to read a lot about battle and murder. If anyone thinks mankind is improving, the evening news parallels the Litany, with battle and murder being prominent subjects. In fact, the Litany and the evening news cover essentially the same ground on many subjects, few of them pleasant.

Over the centuries, scholars and rulers have tried to find justification for their deeds. The commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" becomes amended to cover only certain violence, the kind perpetrated by our enemies, and not our kind of "righteous" violence.

Jesus, as usual, radically reinterprets this Commandment. Even if you are angry with someone or demean them, you have broken this commandment, he says in Matthew 5:21-22. We are to love our enemies, and not seek revenge, "an eye for an eye," he adds in Matthew 5:38-39. Instead of finding loopholes and justifications, he expands the authority of the Commandment to include any hostile acts, any lack of love.

Therefore, none of us have kept the Commandment, we are all guilty. Some react to that by asserting they did the best they could. They announce that they refrained from murder many times when they were tempted, and even controlled their temper on occasion. Others simply



The Convocation of the West Summary Statement

We are a missionary people living out the historical, Biblical Christian faith in the Anglican tradition.

conclude that, since it is hard to keep the Commandment, they don't even try.

These conclusions ignore the Gospel. Christ died on the Cross to fulfill the Law, bearing our sins, including killing in all its forms. He is our only hope, for we are otherwise condemned. That is why he is called our Savior. If trying but failing could justify us, Jesus could skip the Cross. But the Law is not fulfilled by failed tries. One can imagine the response of a human judge or jury to a defense that "I tried to control my anger, but it didn't work so I killed the guy." Only God's forgiveness can save us, not our pathetic attempts at justifying our lawbreaking.

In our new birth through our baptism, we live a new life, in response to the love of God in forgiving us. The ethical formulation for this is articulated by Jesus in Matthew 5 in the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the peacemakers," he says (Matt 5:9) and "Blessed are the merciful" (Matt 5:7). This removes our actions from the realm of Law and transfers them to actions of love. It means not only refraining from killing, but acting in a positive manner to encourage peace and manifest love.

There is a fundamental misunderstanding of this among many, including many Christians. The point is not that Jesus came to lay more and stricter laws on us, nor even that he came to administer the Law in a gentler manner. His ethics instead move entirely outside of the context of the Law. In so doing, he transfers Christian ethics to a motivation of love, not rules. The Beatitudes, which express his ethics most completely in summary, are not given as Law: "Thou shalt be poor in spirit, thou shalt be merciful," etc. Instead, he notes we are "blessed" when we act in following the Beatitudes. In this lifestyle, refraining from violence is, of course, obvious. Beyond that, in the framework of love, we are motivated not simply to stifle our instincts of battle and murder, but to seek ways to help and heal others, including

those who are seen as our enemies.

In our contemporary world, battle and murder, and more, are still commonplace. How do we respond as Christians? Anglicans specifically certainly have sent a mixed message through recent centuries. One would be hard pressed to find Gospel love in uncritically blessing the wars and invasions of monarchs and other civic authorities, even at times calling upon these authorities to burn others at the stake, or otherwise dispatch them. Nor are Anglicans alone in this. The Crusades, for instance, were fought, not in defense, but to conquer, kill, oppress (and, not infrequently, plunder) people in the Middle East, who did not share western Christianity. This was done in the name of God.

We thus come to the uncomfortable question. What does it mean for us to follow Jesus? How can we achieve the blessings of being peacemakers and being merciful? There is both a negative and positive set of implications.

1) Part of the negative is that we should refrain from abortion and urge others to do the same, unless there are extraordinary circumstances

2) The positive implication is that it is not enough to simply legislate a prohibition; we must be prepared to support pre and post natal care, child care (such as daycare), and provide a decent educational system through college, open

without financial burden for all children, at whatever skill level they are.

3) A negative is that we should not kill, or allow killing, of older people, even if they appear to consent to it. That this must even be said shows that our society has come a long way from Christian values.

4) The positive implication is that we should support a health system which can provide adequate care, including hospice and home care, for all those in need.

5) A negative is that we should not support judicial killing of killers to teach them that killing is wrong. Of particular note is



Sermon on the Mount by Carl Bloch (1877)
Public Domain

the number of executions done where people have later been shown to be innocent. Humans are fallible judges, it is better to leave it to the Divine expert.

6) The positive implication is that we should support a significantly better mental health system, which can identify dangerous individuals (not in hindsight, as often happens at present) and a legal structure which better ensures incarceration of people who are a threat.

7) War is never a good option, and even supposedly just wars cause death, destruction, misery and grief. The wars in this century have been almost entirely about economics and power, despite propaganda alleging otherwise (to quote, "The first casualty of war is the truth").

8) The positive implication is that peace should always be aggressively sought. We might ask where the peacemakers are in the present conflict in Ukraine, the long ethnic cleansing and oppression of Palestinians being done especially now by recent Israeli governments and illegal settlers, the attacks on, and murders of, Christians in northern Nigeria, the civil war in South Sudan, and so many other places.

The question of peacemaking is especially sharp. The Pope has tried very hard, but most of the world seems

uninterested. In the United States, our Government funds the war in Ukraine, which could not continue without U.S. financial and weapons support (highly profitable for the defense industry). If the U.S. wished, it could broker a compromise peace whenever it wanted, due to the financial realities. Which choice would be following Jesus? The Pope seems to have made the correct conclusion. Is it time for American Christians to speak up with the message of peace? How much longer must the bloodshed and destruction of Ukraine continue, with U.S. help? The same question must be asked of Russian Christians, and Patriarch Kiril bears tremendous guilt in this. But this article won't reach Russians, so I must ask the hard questions to Americans. Russian guilt does not forgive American Christian lack of witness.

Theologians and hierarchs have pondered these questions and written much. But it is the voice of Jesus speaking in the Gospels that really matters. Those clear words spoken long ago on the Mount, as faithfully recorded in Matthew 5, call out through the centuries to you and I today. It is sad that human behavior remains the same. Our only hope is to listen to the sole solution, spoken by the one who gives real peace and who blesses the peacemakers and the merciful.



Save the Dates!
The Missionary Diocese of All Saints
General Synod
April 2-5, 2024



St. Paul of the Cross Passionist Retreat Center

www.stpaulretreat.org

23333 Schoolcraft

Detroit, Michigan 48223

located 14 miles from airport (DTW)

Check-in Tuesday between 3-6 p.m. & depart Friday before noon

But the Greatest of These Is Love



By The Very Rev. Canon Michael Penfield

“If I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” [1 Corinthians 13:2b]

Recently, I saw a Facebook post from Father David down in central California. He posted a picture of a sign that read, “Jesus or Hell”. He was rightly appalled. This sign exhibits a simplistic theology and wrong-headed approach to evangelism that is quite shocking. I then saw the same sign posted on a bridge that spanned Route 17 to Santa Cruz. This coincidence said a lot to me.

Before these events, I had been thinking about the topic of this article, namely love. Bishop Mott’s last article entitled, “Caring Together”, spoke about this very subject, and my daily lessons for July included chapters 12 and 13 of Saint Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, which included the great “Love Chapter”.

Before we look at this subject, however, I must confess that I believe that one of the greatest errors ever made in the Bible is that, when the editors divided Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians into Chapters, they separated Chapter 13 from Chapter 12. Since then, Chapter 13 has been adopted as the reading for weddings. Because it speaks beautifully as to the nature of love, people think that it is appropriate. But this was not

Saint Paul’s intent. He never intended this section to be used as a form of marriage counseling. He intended it to convey the idea that, without love, much of what we do as Christians becomes hollow. He intended it as a caution associated with what he discussed in Chapter 12.

In Chapter 12, Saint Paul writes about the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. He especially wrote about speaking in tongues and prophecy. He wrote that speaking in tongues can be alarming to others, especially those new to the faith and therefore must be done judiciously. And he also wrote that he believed the highest calling was prophecy. In this discourse, Saint Paul was stressing that, like a body which has many different parts, we as Christians are given different spiritual gifts. No one is given all the gifts. And no one has gifts in exactly the same measure. Yet of what Saint Paul wanted us to take note was that, just like a body, all the very different parts are to work in harmony and unity. And at the end of Chapter 12 he introduced what he thought was the most important quality that ALL Christians should share, namely love:

“If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of

prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.” [1 Cor. 13:1-3]

Now, many of us in traditional churches have grown cautious of pastors that speak of nothing but love. In the changes that occurred in the 1960s, many of them were done in the name of love. Some changes truly were out of love; others were really a matter of personal preference. However, by saying they were done “in love”, it provided the reformers with a kind of carte blanche that prevented others from objecting. In other words, it started to be used as a trump card for those who wanted to get their way. But this is not of which we write. It is easy to speak of love; it is much harder to live it.

Because of the misuse of love in the past, I fear that some Christians are concerned that, in some way, speaking of love shows weakness or a lack of commitment to God’s commandments. The signs posted in California may be a reflection of these concerns. Although in the best possible light, one could see these signs that were posted as a wake-up call for people, usually threats like these rarely have the effect we hope. Although this message can be used by God to move people, and although I could see God telling someone that they must post this sign, the fact that it was posted down in San Luis Obispo and up in San Jose indicates to me more of a marketing strategy than a Jeremiah message from God. And let’s face it, the Prophet Jeremiah said what he said knowing full well that no one was going to listen to it. Even God confirmed this with him. So, if it is a ploy to win souls, I am pretty sure it will be a failure.

If we want people to come to the Lord, if we truly want people to believe in Jesus, we need to be conduits for God’s great Love – the love personified in Jesus Christ. Think about this. When the first Jewish converts became Christians, they did not come to the faith because, if they didn’t, they would rot in Hell. They came because they saw Jesus as the promised Messiah. They believed that He is the Christ. The first Gentile converts came to the faith, not to avoid Hell, but because in Christ there was the promise of eternal life and a current life enveloped in the love of God. It was not Hell but the Resurrection that brought mankind to Christ.

But since the Resurrection, the world has worked long and hard to denigrate the promise of Eternal Life that was made and brought to fruition through Jesus Christ. I wonder how many people living now would be convinced to become Christians because of the promise of eternal life. Many have been inoculated against Christianity since their childhood. Others have no concept one way or the other. But many put their hope in science to give them a longer life, or even eternal life, possibly within an android

body. These people need to read Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, and specifically the section on the Island of Laputa, to fully comprehend the foolishness and the dangers associated in putting your trust in science instead of God.

For we who believe, we must first reconcile ourselves to the fact that we are not capable of converting anyone. Only God achieves this. Gimmicks and programs do not work unless God chooses to use them. Once we realize it really is in God’s hand, we then must reconcile ourselves to be instruments for God’s use. If the Lord provides an opportunity for us to evangelize, then we should use it. Force will not work. However, there is something that does work – Love.

Now, as is my habit, I need to digress. I have been observing my neighbors in France lately. It has struck me how they care for one another. Bishop Mott will confirm for you that this is not because

they are French, but rather because they live in a small city – 6,000 souls. It can create an intimacy that is hard to replicate in large communities, but it is in no way guaranteed.

When I originally moved into the neighborhood, most people were standoffish. I was the American; I was a stranger. The two that were the most friendly and helpful were the antique dealer across the street and the Muslim family whose husband did heating and plumbing and helped me out tremendously, often without a charge. But it wasn’t until the house directly

across from me sold that the real nature of love for neighbor became apparent.

The new neighbors moved in from a suburb of Paris. They were friendly and outgoing. When another neighbor in her nineties had a fall, they took care of her and looked in on her until her son from Lyon arrived. It wasn’t an issue. It was “normale” as the French say, meaning, it was what one did! This has happened time and again, and each time the French phrase was the same, “C’est normale”. And yet, I am not sure it is so normal anymore. Are they believers? I really do not know. They never talk about their faith, though they know I am a believer. And they don’t attend church. Yet, they show true Christian love for their neighbors. Tertullian is often quoted as repeating something a pagan had said, “See how these Christians love each other,” but now I find myself, a Christian, saying this of others who are not Christian. And it concerns me greatly.

My nephew once said to me that, if he ever decided to adopt a faith, it would be the Muslim faith. The reason? My brother-in-law was Muslim. He was kind. He was gentle. He treated my sister very well. And he was loving. Why did my nephew say he would become Muslim? Because my brother-in-law exhibited a loving nature, and my nephew wanted to be like that.

Christians, where is our love? If we want to be good evangelists for Christ, how can we be that when we have no love? Granted,



there are many good Christians who exude love. There are those who show it while ministering to others. But sometimes I catch a glimpse of a supposed Christian saying some very hateful things. And I am pretty sure this is not serving the Lord.

It is essential that we as Christians should acknowledge our Christianity. But we need to do more than that. We need to show our love, caring for one another, listening to one another, and supporting one another. Should we shun the sinful? Absolutely not. Jesus dined with sinners. He talked to the undesirables. He even touched the untouchables. We also need to do the same:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” [1 Cor. 13:4-8a]

I do not know of one Province, one Diocese, one parish or one clergyman who does not want their numbers to grow. Many programs are proposed, which may help. It especially helps if the parish is adrift and needs to get focused. But I really believe that growth is not a matter of using traditional or modern language, being east facing or gathered around the table, or even singing modern or traditional hymns. No, I believe the most important thing we can do is get right with God. And the one way we can do this is by fostering a spirit of love. The one thing we can do to fulfill the Great Commission is to be those Christians that others

will look upon and say, “Look how they love.”

When Christ summarized the Law, He succinctly listed only two commandments:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.” And, *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”*

Both of these commandments begin and end in Love. Therefore, there can be no better way to live out these commandments than in Love. There is no better way to be a Christian than through Love. And there is no better way to change the world for the better than with Love.

Brothers and sisters, I invite everyone to reread Chapter 13 of First Corinthians, but not as some sort of wedding dedication to love. Rather read it as our dedication to God. Let us adopt an attitude of love like my French friends who may not even be Christians. Let us show love by what we say and, more importantly, by what we do. We may not see our parishes grow – that is up to God – but we may find ourselves growing in our faith and devotion to God, and we may find that we are helping to spread the faith to others. Let us love those who are easy to love, but also let us especially love those who are NOT easy to love. And if we do this genuinely and honestly, I believe the Lord can set a fire in the hearts of others.

Amen and God bless.



Request for a Bishop Coadjutor

The Standing Committee for the Missionary Diocese of All Saints will be closing nominations for our next Bishop Coadjutor. The Search Committee has a website (<http://MDASBISHOP.com>) for such nominations. Since this man will be leading our Diocese in conjunction with our Bishop Ordinary, our other Bishops, our Vicars General and the rest of our Standing Committee, we ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit will guide us in selecting the right man. I would ask that all our parishes, clergy and laity, pray that God will insure the correct man be selected for this very important job in keeping us within the One, True, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. To this end, Fr. Christopher Parrish of St. Luke's Chapel in the Hills has drafted the following prayer, which I hope will help you:

A Prayer for the Missionary Diocese of All Saints' Selection of a New Bishop Coadjutor

Almighty God, giver of every good gift. Look graciously upon Thy Holy Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a Bishop Coadjutor for the Missionary Diocese of All Saints that we may receive a faithful pastor who will preach the Gospel, care for Thy people, equip us for ministry, and lead us forth in fulfillment of the Great Commission: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God bless,
Fr. Michael Penfield
Vicar General