
Neighbors, Immigrants, and Liminal Space

A Lenten Reflection from the *Cathedral Times*

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*In Christ there is no East or West, in him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth
Join hands, disciples of the faith, whate'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as his child is surely kin to me*
—Hymn 529

While the words of this hymn and the words of our Lord Jesus seem so simple to comprehend and follow, the issue of our neighbors and immigrants in this country are not so easy to comprehend and follow.

In Luke 10, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable Jesus teaches the lawyer about what he must do to inherit eternal life, but beyond that Jesus teaches through this parable who is our neighbor and that we must show mercy like the Good Samaritan and “go and do likewise.”

Today’s issues about immigrants in the United States seem very much like the man who was beat up, stripped, and left to die. Are not the many immigrants of this nation being treated much the same? The ethnicity of these peoples and the forgetfulness of our lawmakers have left these races in a state of fear. Forgetfulness because it appears many members of our congress do not remember the principles on which this nation was founded. Fear because these people are being searched out, stripped of their livelihoods and families, and sent away or imprisoned. Are we as Christians following the words given to us in the Bible?

In Leviticus 19 we are told, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

In September 2010, the House of Bishops wrote a Pastoral Letter addressing the complex issue of migrants, immigrants, the border patrol, local ranchers, and the Christian Communities. The letter states: “both the Old and New Testaments declare the importance of hospitality to resident alien and strangers. All human beings are therefore deserving of dignity and respect as we affirm our Baptismal Covenant (BCP, p 305).”

The covenant asks, “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” We respond, “I will, with God’s help.” The letter then addresses nine salient issues on immigration. The letter is well thought-out and provides framework to move through liminal or Holy Saturday space where the immigrants are being persecuted and are in a transitional place in their daily lives. The crux of the letter asks for compassion in how the immigrants are approached and treated.

This Pastoral Letter is very much like the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He created a way for the man to be taken care of and showed great compassion in doing so. The Pastoral Letter looks at various aspects of lack of respect, lack of compassion and introjection of fear.

Our dear friend, the Rev. Dr. Bill Harkins, frequently speaks of “holy space.” It strikes me that this is where many of the

immigrants are at present. In their lives, they are in the time similar to the time between Good Friday, pain and crucifixion, and Easter Sunday, waiting for the resurrection. The immigrants are in the tension of the “already.” These people live in the constant fear of today because they do not know what tomorrow will bring. This is like the disciples, knowing what Jesus had told them would happen, but waiting for the resurrection and hoping it will come. Even then, many doubted Christ’s resurrection until he appeared again to them.

So how do we as Christians help transition these people through the “holy space?” How do practice hesed to provide loving kindness and justice to these people? Pray to God that we may find the way to assist them in this very difficult time.

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