



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



ANIMATING PEACE AND JUSTICE AT THE “Q”

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“For God has not given you a spirit of fear; but of power, love, and a sound mind.” ~ 2 Timothy 1:7



As I had never attended a Quinquennial Congress in the past, I did not know quite what to expect. Yes, I had heard many stories in passing about the “Q”; and they were always affectionately referred to by the city in which they were held. So when I was asked to be one of the speakers at the 2016 Q, I said absolutely. I always look forward to sharing my heart with my brother and sister Franciscans. I met with the Q Committee to get a grasp on what was mine to do. I was told that I would animate and ignite the brothers and sisters. Well, I believe that *is* what is mine to do: animate, guide, ignite and enliven – by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The above Scripture passage was dropped in my spirit last March. I didn’t know why; but when you work alongside the Holy Spirit, you don’t ask why. By day three of the Q, the *why* became clear. Friar Dan Horan’s talk on racism and xenophobia sparked something in the hearts and minds of his audience. By the end of our Little Fraternity sharing, fear was a common concept in the conversations I was privy to. I knew hearts were heavy and filled with many more questions than answers; which I believe is a good thing. As the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke once wrote, live the questions; don’t be quick to find the answers, but just live the questions.

Let us recall the Gospel story of Jesus in the boat asleep as the storms came crashing and tossing the boat to and fro. The disciples were afraid they would

perish in that storm. Fearful and a bit annoyed, they woke Jesus to ask if he cared that they were about to perish. Matthew’s Gospel tells us that Jesus got up and rebuked the winds and the sea as he asked the disciples why were they afraid. When Jesus is in your boat, what have you to fear? In our world, there are many things to be concerned with: the “isms” constantly plague us as violence is on the rise. Do not let Jesus out of your boat! And if he wants to take a nap, let him!

It is perfectly normal to feel fear. It is one of our natural defenses against clear and present dangers. We need to be afraid when we encounter a threat or life-endangering situations. But as the threat passes, so should the fear. Unfortunately, we tend to fear things and situations that are not life threatening, like public speaking. These types of fear paralyze us and keep us from being who God created us to be. God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. The power of Him who is within you as opposed to him who lives in the world. As Scripture tells us, perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love is also a present-moment experience, while fear is fretting about what will happen in the future. Be here, now. Stay in the present moment, in that perfect love – which is the peace and love that surpasses all understanding.

So, just for today, meditate on your relationship with the Lord. Is it deep and abiding? Or, is it lukewarm and shallow? Your relationship with our loving God determines your reactions to fear. What can you do right in this moment to strengthen that relationship, so that you abide in love and not in fear? We live out our love of God by loving our brothers and sisters. Who can you pray for right now, in this moment? Who can you give an encouraging word to right now, in this moment? Who can you comfort right now, in this moment? What you do for the least of these brothers and sisters, you have done for our loving Lord. Remember, keep Jesus in your boat and do not fear the storm.

Pictured: Members and friends of the National Commission of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation at the Q