

Beloved Community

June 3, 2018

“Put away from us the hurtful things, and give to us those things that are good and beneficial.” Things like rest and compassion – a healthy rhythm and balance to our lives. May we be mindful that we are clay and vulnerable vessels imagined and formed by divine will. We are not perfect nor are we unbreakable. We are not great but we are dearly loved and vital. We are insignificant, and yet each of us has the potential to change our world. We are bound to live upon the surface of our existence even though a deep and eternal world exists within and about us.

We are clay jars in whom divine treasure is invested. But we are also clay vessels vulnerable to all the violence, instability, and fragility of being part of creation. We are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down and yet there is this hidden power within us that heals, and deals, and survives, and gets back up to not just face another day, but to give thanks for the day the Lord has made. We all have lives to look back upon, and when we look back we are amazed at all that has taken place.

Just yesterday, Doug and Vickie Miller celebrated fifty years of marriage. Jack and Hazel make immense effort to be with us every Sunday. We come together every week because our lives have been joined together at this altar that offers to us and to our world, life resurrected from death, forgiveness from offense, belonging from fractured lives. Love, belonging, goodness, sacrifice, faithfulness, forgiveness, understanding, community –balance – rest – belonging. This is how we keep from being crushed, despaired, forsaken, or destroyed... we have this divine treasure that is beloved community to which we are invited to be a part – the beloved community of family – the beloved community of the parish – the beloved community of the city – the beloved community of the nation - the beloved community of all nations – of the world – the beloved community of God. Put away from us the ludicrous idea that we are autonomous or separate from the others in our life and world. Give to us the things beneficial and good for the whole community.

I saw a real doctor for the first time in too many years this past week. They took my blood and they analyzed it. They said I have not been taking the best care of myself. My sugar level is too high. Too many hurtful things going in, must increase the good and beneficial in my diet – in my life. I knew this news would initiate concern and action in Annie, and, yes! It did. This divine treasure of beloved community – the ability of two or more clay and fragile vessels to bind together in mutual care of one another - this gift of beloved community is not only shared in marriage, it is shared in the kitchen of this parish, in the prayers from the chapel, from the Sol House and from your house. It is shared in the care for our city, the love of our neighbors, compassion for the poor, inclusion of the immigrant and alien, embrace of persons of different cultures, faith, and identity

What makes beloved community? Is it not the decision to be one – to be part of one – to not crush, despair, forsake, or destroy one another? But instead to build up, support, encourage, and embrace one another. Is it not to heed to our Lord's commandment to love one another as we have been loved by God? Is it not to mobilize our resources for the sake of others? It is our beloved community that will shine light out of the darkness of these times. It is our beloved community that will make the body of Jesus visible, not only in the Eucharist, but in the actions and attitudes of our life together.

O God, your never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, (and when we say "us" we do not mean "me" but for the beloved community of all creation, of the community of family, of parish, of city, state, nation, and world) we entreat you, put away from US all hurtful things, and give to us those things that are profitable and good for US; through Jesus Christ who embraced the whole world within the compassionate arms of sacrificial love, and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever.

Amen