

March 6, 2017

First Reading: LV 19:1-2, 11-18

Psalm: PS 19:8, 9, 10, 15

Gospel: MT 25:31-46

For the past few months, I've been slowly learning more about the life of Servant of God Dorothy Day. Day was a champion of Catholic Social Teaching who, starting in the 1930s, dove head first into helping the poor by opening Houses of Hospitality. She encouraged those she met to live in solidarity with the poor, share a meal with those who might be different from them, and view each other as beloved Children of God. One example of this was when a newspaper reporter came to visit Dorothy one day at a house of hospitality that she set up. When asked where he could find her, the workers of the house pointed the reporter to the back yard. There, he found Dorothy talking with a woman. The woman wasn't making much sense and seemed to ramble on with her story. The woman was also unkempt and was in need of a bath. Dorothy did not end the conversation when she noticed the reporter, but let the woman finish her story. When the story finally came to the end, Dorothy then turned to the reporter and asked him, "Which one of us do you wish to speak to?" Never once did she think this woman was below her or unworthy of being interviewed for a newspaper. Never once did she tell the woman she needed to go take a bath. Never once did she interrupt the story and tell the woman she wasn't making sense. Dorothy met the woman where she was at this point in her life and loved her for it.

I often find myself doing the opposite of what Dorothy Day did. I find myself trying to figure out what is best for me instead of what is best for the other person I'm with. When I help out in a ministry, I look for what is easiest for me. I try to make my faith work for the ease of my life instead of opening my life to what my faith is calling me to. Or I push aside my faith all together to make things easier for me. I ignore the service project I could be doing or I walk past the person who is homeless without even giving them the dignity of eye contact. I villainize and ignore the person who approaches politics in a different way than I do, instead of actually having a conversation with them. I seek to make myself feel more comfortable and ignore the suffering of others.

Thankfully, my God sees when I am uncomfortable and uses those moments to invite me to love the other. In Leviticus, God tells Moses to tell his people that "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And in Matthew, Christ tells his followers that to gain eternal life with him, they should feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care of the ill, and visit those in prison. God invites us into those uncomfortable moments to encounter Him. We can find beauty in the darkest situations. We can see God in the stranger. Our lives can be enriched by fully engaging in those awkward moments with others. We just have to make the effort to encounter the other.

1) When was the last time you found yourself in an uncomfortable situation where you had to choose between playing it safe or fully engaging in your faith?

2) What is one way you can encounter Christ through your service towards others?

Reflection by Vicky Hathaway, parishioner at St. Edward, Lowell, and Vice Chair of the Diocesan Peace and Social Justice Commission