



At A Distance – Pentecost 2 – Sunday June 14, 2020

Take a Knee

“I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in the streets; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to the death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But those who endure to the end will be with me.” Today’s Gospel of Matthew

We don't seem to kneel much anymore as people or as Christians...maybe because we are all getting older and it is getting decidedly harder to get up and down. Kneeling is hard, it takes a lot to get down and to stay there. It takes a strong will, and a strong spirit. Our aching bodies are telling us to rise and get comfortable again. Whatever we need to do, we can do standing or sitting. But can we? Maybe we don't kneel so much anymore because perhaps we are getting prouder and less humble as Christians and as a society. We don't like to acknowledge that which is greater than our own individuality, our own personal uniqueness, our solo-ness, our invulnerability and our strength. I can remember that as a child, I knelt a lot. I knelt in prayer each and every night in thanksgiving for the day. I knelt to unburden my spirit as I confessed my sins against myself, my community and my God. I knelt to receive the Sacrament of the Table, rejoicing in its profound ability to re-connect me to that from which I had become separated. Kneeling is an act of humility, an act of prayer, and an act of my personal servanthood to my Creator.

Kneeling has always been a symbol, and that has been keenly and brutally reinforced in our minds and our hearts in these last weeks. Four years ago, a young athlete knelt as a symbol of the unfulfilled promise of our culture, our society, our religions and our nation to respect the dignity of every human being. He knelt to symbolize the misuse of power and privilege by institutions that were created to protect us. He knelt in humility and courage. He knelt sacrificing his career, his livelihood, his safety and that of his family. He knelt because that is what he could do and that is what he was called to do. His kneeling was a prophecy, and like most prophets and prophecies -- both in Biblical times and today -- it was unwelcomed by the stiff-necked and tone-deaf community to which it was directed. Like most prophets he was reviled, disrespected, rebuked, ridiculed, defamed, defaced and maligned.

Two weeks ago, this young athlete's prophecy was fulfilled ironically by another who knelt. This one clad in blue and wrapped in an oath before God and before society to serve and protect. This one knelt not in humility or in deep respect, not in prayer or in compassion. No, this one knelt in power, might, control and pride...joyous in the submission of another human being. Yes, this one knelt in fulfillment of the prophecy; the stark, stunning and barbaric fulfillment of the young athlete's prophecy for all of us to see. The prophecy fulfilled in 8 minutes and 46 seconds on a spring day in a Minneapolis street. The prophecy fulfilled and fulfilled again and again as the video us replayed and replayed.

And now we lament, we mourn, we are appalled, we grieve and wail and rent our garments. Why, we ask ourselves! Why did this happen? Why...the same reason that it always does and always did. We have never listened to those who prophesy. We have never wanted to hear the hard words, or the chastisement about how lives and society are devolving, decaying, coming apart right before our unseeing eyes. We have always denied our prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr, George Fox, Malcom X, Bobby Seale, Tommy Smith and John Carlos. Frank Fools Crow, Chief Ray Thunderchild, Dennis Banks, Vernon and Clyde Bellecourt, Russell Means, Leonard Peltier and yes... Colin Kaepernick. We never listen! And then we gasp in shock when we see the prophecy play out before us. We lament, "I didn't know," "I didn't know," "I didn't know."

We didn't know because we didn't want to know. Knowing makes us uncomfortable. Knowing makes us complicit, knowing makes us responsible. Our comfort, privilege and inaction helped us to create, motivate and release the Derick Chauvins of the world, smack into the middle of our world. And now, what are we to do? What are we to do? What are we to do?

I don't know about you, but I know what I am going to do. I am going to "take a knee." No matter how hard it is. No matter how broken I am. No matter how much it hurts. I am going to get on my knees again each and every night just like I used to. And do what? To pray and to beg forgiveness for not listening to the prophets that our Blessed Creator has sent and continues to send us.

To say...I am sorry, Blessed one.

To proclaim, to covenant and to declare and promise....

I can, and I will do better.

I will be better.

I will see better.

I will think better, listen better, love better, honor better.

I will DO better! Act better. Respect better.

This Creator, Blessed One, Heavenly Father, God our Mother I do promise, covenant and acclaim.... This is my Solemn Vow!

The Elders tell us that the honor of one is the honor of all, and the burden of one is the burden of all. I believe with all my heart that this is true. Blessed Ones, today there is a lot of burden to go around and not a whole lot of honor. So, Saints, I urge you to join me. Take a knee. Physically if you can, metaphorically-symbolically- virtually if you can't get down. I know it is painful, I know it hurts, we are stiff and broken. But today, I ask you to take a knee in the raising up of our prophets and the gifts of enlightenment that they have given us. Take a knee, in humility and deep respect. Take a knee to say yes to our baptismal covenant to see the face of Christ in everyone and respect the dignity of every human being. Take a knee in gratitude to our Prophet Colin. And take a knee to take a knee in love and deep respect to our Brother George. And take a knee to beg forgiveness for Derek and for us.