

I HEAR THE WHISPERINGS ON MANY SIDES

“I hear the whisperings of many. Terror on every side! Denounce! Let us denounce him!”

Those words were spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. Prophets are not always popular people because they speak an unvarnished truth that not all want to hear. But Jeremiah did not give in to the fear even when some tried to kill him. Jeremiah said: I know the Lord is with me.”

On April 3, 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. arrived in Memphis, TN to give a talk as the city sanitation workers were on strike. It was an ugly and a dangerous time. We sometimes forget now that Dr. King was non-violent always. He did not act violently when he was violently acted upon. At the end of his talk that night he said these words.

“And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers? Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land! And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!!

He was dead less than 24 hours later. An assassin's bullet. He died unafraid. He was 39 years old.

Jesus said to his apostles: “Fear no one.” And Jesus feared no one. He died a violent death, falsely accused and murdered out of expediency. He was considered a threat to the delicate balance of status quo between the religious powers in Israel and the political power of Rome. He too died unafraid. There was something about the heart of this man, this man from Galilee. Many years later we would come to describe that heart as something truly sacred. The Sacred Heart of Jesus. What makes Jesus different is his heart. Same for Jeremiah. Same for Martin Luther King Jr.

Please listen to this reflection on the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Sr. Ruth Burrows, OCD:

Jesus stands before us with a pierced Heart. We have seen how knowledge of God has always cost. The human heart has to be broken open before it can receive God, and thus it was with Jesus. And the deepest mystery of all is that we learn that the Father's own Heart is pierced. How can we enter into this pierced Heart? Only by becoming like it, living in love at whatever cost, paying the high price of loving.

Too easily we assume that loving is a pleasurable experience. Most surely it is the only sweetness in life, but this must be understood correctly. True love is always bleeding in our mortal life. You simply cannot have love in this life without pain.

Just think of our own way of carrying on. We get hurt, offended...what do we do? Shrink into ourselves, erect all sorts of barriers. Our heart has withdrawn from the one who hurts us in any way. We mustn't be hurt, "I matter," our poor ego cries. But that is not how Jesus loves. If we would be like him we must struggle to the death with all this, refuse to curl up, refuse to withdraw in the slightest. We must go on exposing ourselves, giving ourselves, pouring ourselves out.

We say we want to love, we say we want to serve, we want to give of ourselves, and at bottom we are saying we want selfish satisfaction. We want to feel we matter, are important, we want to feel fulfilled; in other words we are using others, and the beautiful concept of love is being abused. Love is selfless. The way into the Heart of Jesus is not through intellectual insight, not through glowing emotion, but through learning to pay the cost of pure love. There is sacrifice involved in letting others be themselves."

We come to the end of June, a month in which we honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Your heart is so valuable. So valuable to Him. So valuable in itself. It is the one thing that Jesus desires from us. The gift of my heart. Do not be afraid—of anyone or anything. Open your hearts even if they have been hurt. Do not be afraid. Fear no one.