

20<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2017

You've got to be taught to hate and fear  
You've got to be taught from year to year  
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear  
You've got to be carefully taught. You've got to be carefully taught

Do you recognize those lyrics? They are from the 1949 Broadway musical South Pacific. And even if you don't know the musical, you can tell that the song is about racial prejudice. Those words sounds very much like those of Nelson Mandela whom former President Obama quoted in the largest "tweet" ever following the Charlottesville protests. "No one is born hating another person because of the color of their skin or their background or their religion,"

You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be carefully taught.

These past weeks we have seen again the ravages of racial, ethic and religious prejudice. In Charlottesville, Barcelona, Finland and who knows where else, we have seen a global community victim of the evils of inhuman beings who say their way of viewing the world eclipses God's way of viewing the world in which we all live. The supremacy of one race, ethnicity or religion over others eclipses God's creation of the human person as infinitely valuable and worthy of dignity and respect.

It's very timely given the horrific events of the past week or so that our scriptures speak of inclusion and acceptance of the "other", those who are not part of the tribe. The people of Israel needed to be taught that to be the "chosen" people, did not mean that others, non-Jews were excluded from God's love, care and compassion. Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah speaking on God's behalf. "My house shall be a house of prayer for ALL nations"

Even Jesus needed to be taught that his mission to the people of Israel would be for the "other" as well as the lost sheep of the people of Israel. And here his teacher is a Canaanite woman who is pleading with him for the healing of her daughter. In this startling exchange when Jesus says ""It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." Her response eclipses his "prejudice" or if that is too strong a

word, his “disinterest”. He is startled out of his way of thinking. We know this is a very critical moment in Jesus’ ministry. How do we know that? Whenever Matthew wants to make a point about God’s in-breaking into time and history he uses the word “BEHOLD”. And Behold there was a Canaanite woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and challenge Jesus’ response to her.

And then there is Paul, the Pharisee, a faithful Jew who challenges the prejudice of Peter, James and the Jews who had come to belief in Jesus. The Gentiles, the “other” was welcome in God’s plan of salvation for “all nations”.

Just as we have to be taught to hate and fear and judge the “other”, so we have to be taught the opposite. We have to ‘unlearn’ the prejudices that separate us one from another. Not an easy task! Are we by “nature” prone to distrust the other and consider our selves “better” even “supreme” or is it by “nurture”. Today we have the invitation to look at ourselves and examine our own prejudices, whatever it is that makes us see the “other” as less than ourselves.

We can also ask ourselves, if you’ve got to be taught to hate and fear, do you have to be taught to love and trust? Or is our true nature to love and trust. If we are hard-wired for God, made in the image and likeness of God, isn’t that who we are called to be?

Just yesterday we had a wonderful wedding take place here that was a gathering of the “global community”. Guests had come from around the world, the Philippines, Barcelona, Paris, Copenhagen and many other places to celebrate the power of love between two people. Today at this Eucharist we are celebrating the power of God’s love expressed in the life of Jesus and the gift of himself for us.

We are created by LOVE and FOR LOVE. Let’s do our best to live that way and model that love for others.