

Where is Your Brother?

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Stirring the waters: Making the Impossible Possible.

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Where is your brother? This is the question God asks of Cain. It is also the question God asks each one of us today. Pope Francis asked this question in his homily in Lampedusa during his first official trip outside Rome. Many of us are familiar with this question. It comes directly from Genesis chapter 4, “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother, Abel?’” This is the question we should ask when a migrant dies at sea. Where is your brother? This question has a greater urgency in light of the current refugee crisis.

In the Bible narratives, Jesus and his parents slipped into Egypt to escape Herod’s killing of infants. Our Lord began his earthly life in a situation similar to that of many undocumented children. He was a refugee. The story of refugees in the Bible is also a story about God, and about God’s people.

Our brothers, our sisters are people throughout history who have been forgotten, oppressed or dismissed as unimportant. They include:

- The unborn babies who are victims of abortion,
- The poor people in need of help.
- The orphans, the widows and the strangers.
- The forgotten elderly people in nursing homes.
- The oppressed in need of justice, the migrant in need of acceptance, the lonely in need of comfort, and the sick in need of healing.



The city of Nineveh made us aware of the destructive nature of sin and the merciful love of God.

Sin is a reality! The word Sin is not mere theological jargon. Today many have forgotten what sin is, that sin is an offence against God and against one's neighbour. Many do not think that war is a sin, but war is ever-present in many parts of the world today. Many do not think that bad governance is a sin but yet it prevails. Many do not think discrimination is a sin, but there is discrimination everywhere; that corruption is a sin, cheating is a sin, injustice is a sin, envy is a sin, racism is a sin, mass misery all around us is a form of sin -naked and unashamed.

Because of sin, peace is only an echo or a whisper in so many parts of the contemporary world.

- Peace is only an echo in Israel.
- Peace is only an echo in South Sudan, in Syria and in Iraq.
- There is so much hurt in this world.
- There is so much harm being done by us to one another.
- There is so much destruction and so many wars.
- Peace seems to be but an echo from the distant past.
- Peace is still an echo for millions of children in Africa and Asia who dream of daily bread, go to sleep without a bed, only to wake up without any bread.
- Peace is only an echo in so many cities and communities threatened by terrorism.
- Peace is an echo in broken marriages, in disrupted homes, in shattered friendships, in evil deeds, in good deeds undone and good words unsaid.

The essence of Christianity is not only to be found in the observance of ritual but also in love. And love is found not only in words, love is found in deeds. Sacrifice is the language of love. For if there is one law that we can be most certain of, it is the law that binds people of all faiths and even people of no faith together. It is love. To love and care is the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He was called "good" not because he was a person who performed religious rituals but because he reached out in compassionate love, to someone in need.

Last Wednesday we received ashes to mark the beginning of Lent. In our Lenten observance, the entire Church seeks to enter into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. Together, we ask pardon from God and open our hearts to God's merciful love.

Lent is a season of *metanoia* for individuals, for the Church, and for the world. In the first reading, we encounter the Prophet Jonah, who was sent by God to the pagan city of Nineveh, to preach for massive conversion. God responded as we have just prayed in the Psalm, he never spurns a contrite and humbled heart.

Nineveh was a city which Jonah would have preferred to avoid. The world is full of such cities.

- There are Ninevehs in our time.
- Like the prophet Jonah, there are many prophets of our time who would prefer not to preach in their own Nineveh.
- Although Nineveh was a city in Prophet Jonah's time, Nineveh also stands for all the great cities of our modern world.
- Nineveh stands for that place only you can go.
- The people of Nineveh stand for the community only you can reach.
- The situation of today's Nineveh stands for the opportunity only you can fill.
- There is a Nineveh in our lives.
- Nineveh might be your government and government policies.
- Your Nineveh might be your work environment.
- Your Nineveh might be your neighbours down the street.
- **Our Nineveh might be the deportation camps in need of a prophet Jonah. You are that prophet.**
- Nineveh ultimately stands for any part of the will of God that you are afraid to face.
- Nineveh stands for where you are afraid to go, but God wants you there. Many women today, like the queen of the South, have searched for wisdom and are following God's inspiration. They go to the great cities where men, women and children are sold, bought and used as objects. They go to confront the crimes of our modern day slavery. These are women of substance who risk their lives to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate the victims of today's slavery. These are women who, like Jonah, continue to raise their

prophetic voices before chief executives and lawmakers, in search of justice, especially for the less privileged, the weak and the powerless. These are women who continue to stir the conscience of many in this world of global indifference.

In the Bible, the Canaanite woman is also called a woman of great faith. She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their masters' table.' As women of faith, the reference to leftovers should grab our attention. What we need to bring to the Nineveh of our time are just **leftovers**. However, these leftovers in the kingdom of God are like mustard seeds that will grow.

Today we pray that God will extend His Mercy to all our brothers and sisters. We pray that our mother Mary and the angels of the Most High may lead us in our share of the life of the Beatitudes, to pursue justice, peace brother and humility.

- People of justice see others needs.
- People of humility see the good in others.
- People who are just and humble do not seek their protection in riches, in power, in fame but in the name of the Lord.

Adapted by Anne Kelleher, RENATE Communications.