

John Perkins Center, Seattle Pacific University

An end of year (June) guided devotion and reflection by Caenisha Warren, Executive Director of the John Perkins Center.

(The Franciscan Blessing is an opening blessing used to start the year with SPU student leaders at an annual training conference in September.)

Franciscan/Benedictine Blessing

Sister Ruth Marlene Fox, OSB, 1985 of Sacred Heart Monastery in Richardton, ND

May God bless us with discomfort,
at easy answers, half-truths,
and superficial relationships
so that we may live
deep within our hearts.

Guide us, as we lead others ...

May God bless us with anger
At injustice, oppression,
And exploitation of people,
So that we may work for
Justice, freedom and peace.

Guide us, as we lead others ...

May God bless us with tears,
To shed for those who suffer pain,
Rejection, hunger and war,
So that we may reach out our hands
To comfort them and
To turn their pain to joy

Guide us, as we lead others ...

And may God bless us
With enough foolishness
To believe that we can
Make a difference in the world,
So that we can do
What others claim cannot be done

To bring justice and kindness
To all God's children and the poor.

Amen

Quote:

“The concept of reconciliation is not irretrievable, but I am convinced that before we theologians can interpret the depths of the divine action of reconciliation we must first articulate the profound deformities of Christian intimacy and identity in modernity. Until we do, all theological discussions of reconciliation will be exactly what they tend to be: (a) ideological tools for facilitating negotiations of power; or (b) socially exhausted idealist claims masquerading as serious theological accounts. In truth, it is not at all clear that most Christians are ready to imagine reconciliation.”

— Willie James Jennings, [The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race](#)

Amos 5

Woe to you who long

for the day of the LORD!

Why do you long for the day of the LORD?

That day will be darkness, not light.

¹⁹ It will be as though a man fled from a lion

only to meet a bear,

as though he entered his house

and rested his hand on the wall

only to have a snake bite him.

²⁰ Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not

light—

pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

²¹ “I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.

²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and
grain offerings,

I will not accept them.

Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,

I will have no regard for them.

²³ Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river,

righteousness like a never-failing stream

Quote:

“Learn to be quiet enough to hear the genuine within yourself so that you can hear it in others”

- Marian Wright Edelman

Reflection Time

1.

*May God bless us with discomfort,
at easy answers, half-truths,
and superficial relationships
so that we may live
deep within our hearts.*

“The ultimate measure of a [person] is not where [they] stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where [they] stand at times of challenge and controversy.” - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

Questions for reflection:

As you reflect on different parts of this season or year and the work towards reconciliation, what were the places where you were brought into spaces of discomfort? In what ways has that shaped any growth, clarity or definition about your role(s) and your work, or about who you are or hope to become in this space?

2.

*May God bless us with anger
At injustice, oppression,
And exploitation of people,
So that we may work for
Justice, freedom and peace.*

“It cannot be denied that too often the weight of the Christian movement has been on the side of the strong and the powerful and against the weak and oppressed – this, despite the gospel.”
- Howard Thurman

Questions for reflection:

Were there spaces where you experienced, or you were witness to, injustices within your work and institution? In what ways does this witness and/or experience speak towards work in advocating for justice or give shape to reconciliation work in your programs and institution?

3.

*May God bless us with tears,
To shed for those who suffer pain,
Rejection, hunger and war,
So that we may reach out our hands
To comfort them and
To turn their pain to joy*

“We who follow Jesus are working in wounds, working with wounds, and working through wounds.” - Dr. Willie J. Jennings, Acts Commentary

Questions for reflection:

Were the spaces where you experienced, or where you have been witness to, pain or rejection in/through your work? Where has this cultivated compassion and were there ways that this compassion was made manifest in your work this year? How does this speak into the compassion and spaces of comfort that you might hope to create?

4.

*And may God bless us
With enough foolishness
To believe that we can
Make a difference in the world,
So that we can do
What others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness
To all God’s children and the poor.*

“We can endure almost anything if we are centered, if we have some focus in our life. You can endure if you have an anchor.” – Rev. Dr. Renita J. Weems

“When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don’t speak out ain’t nobody going to speak out for you.” - Fannie Lou Hamer

Questions for reflection:

Were there spaces this year within which you stepped out to advocate and build toward change within your institution or your program? Where you do hold hope, or how are you motivated to continue work in reconciliation work with community?

Contemporized Franciscan Prayer

- by Rev. Dominique D. Gilliard

May God bless you with holy anger at white supremacy, police brutality, and racial oppression, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from systemic racism, xenophobia, and anti-blackness, so that you may sacrificially reach out to them in love, learn how to stand in solidarity with them, and work alongside them to transform broken systems and structures.

May God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we really CAN make a difference in this world, so that we are able, with God's grace, to help the Church do what others claim cannot be done: truly become an interconnected Body, where when one part suffers, every part suffers with it.

Amen