Opinion

by James Hug

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

March 24, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In the section of John's Gospel in which this passage appears (John 10:31-42), Jesus is engaged in several conflicts with the Jews in Jerusalem. This passage begins with the Jews picking up rocks to stone him because he has said, "My God is in me and I am in God." They interpreted that statement as blasphemy, as "making himself God."

Jesus replied, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods" '? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom God has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not perform my God's works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that God is in me and I am in God."

In the past I had interpreted this passage as a confusion of language ("God" and "gods" certainly aren't on a par), an equivocation, whether deliberate or unconscious. This time reading this passage, however, it struck me that this may be an intriguing revelation of Jesus' sense of the Divine. He sees God, he sees the Divine, wherever he sees the Word of God and the Works of God manifested in life. As he said about himself, God is in them and they are in God.

In that context, three contemporary events herald this presence of the Divine and demand our serious religious attention.

The March for Our Lives, organized by students across the U.S. calling for an end to gun violence and for safety for schools, is taking place as I write this on March 24th in Washington D.C. and cities and towns across the country. It is the young standing up for life, for nonviolence, for security. It is a social act of love in response to the violence tearing the nation apart. As a major organized demand for peace, justice for all, and love in our communities, it is what Jesus would have recognized as a work of God and a sign of the coming of God's Reign among us. As he said about himself, God is in these young people and they are in God.

In the last few days, an ecumenical group of Christian leaders from across the country issued "Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis." It is a response to the current state of the country and an effort "to renew our theology of public discipleship and witness." "When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics. … It is often the duty of Christian leaders, especially elders, to speak the truth in love to our churches and to name and warn against temptations, racial and cultural captivities, false doctrines, and political idolatries – and even our complicity in them."

This confessional statement came from an Ash Wednesday retreat and is offered to Christian communities for prayer and reflection leading up to an action phase to be launched on Pentecost, the anniversary of the birth of the church through the empowerment and missioning of the Holy Spirit of God. The document features six expressions of shared faith, each followed by a rejection of "practices and policies by political leaders which dangerously corrode the soul of the nation and deeply threaten the public integrity of our faith."

For those who know the Catholic social tradition, each of these beliefs and condemnations will resonate deeply. Calling all Catholic leaders: The Catholic Church needs to join this effort quickly. God is in these Christian ecumenical leaders – elders among us, calling us to greater unity – and they are in God.

A gathering entitled Revolutionary Love: Complete the Dream is scheduled for the weekend of April 6-8 in New York City. It is an interfaith gathering marking the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Its focus is "How do we harness love to dismantle racism, poverty, militarism and sexism today?" Its goal is to build a broad interfaith movement nationally to address the crises of today. It will be available by livestream for those unable to attend. As Jesus said about himself, God is in these interfaith leaders calling us to greater unity and they are in God.

Advertisement

The young, elders in the Christian ecumenical community, and the interfaith community all are moving now to draw our nation back to basic shared religious values of truth, justice, love and respect for all in the greater unity of the human family, in the family of creation.

Something sacred, something Divine is moving among us, inviting us. ...

[Jesuit Fr. James E. Hug serves as sacramental minister for the Adrian Dominican Sisters and writes on spirituality for social transformation. His blog, "Truth that does Justice," can be found on the website for the Dominican Center: Spirituality for Mission.]