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“I am meek and humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29).

Isa 40:25-31; Matt 11:28-30

In the short run, meekness has historically been no match for violent aggression. When Jesus said the meek would inherit the earth, he was describing the Kingdom of God his disciples were to strive for. He may also have been describing the stolid dignity and patience of those who hold out knowing they will win in the long run in their pursuit of justice and truth. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. understood this.

The Beatitudes were a revolution in human thinking and a conversion of heart intended to transform history. Jesus’ death on the cross proclaimed the ultimate victory of love over hate, and his resurrection revealed God’s promise of a New Creation for the pure of heart and the meek of the earth.

When Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492, he found the native Taino peoples to be peaceful, gentle and full of good will and generous to a fault. Within 30 years, 90 percent of the Tainos in the Caribbean had been destroyed by slavery and disease under the Conquest. As the Spanish and Portuguese colonists spread through Central and South America in search of gold, silver and land, millions among the native populations were decimated.

In conquered Mexico, a quiet counter revolution began in 1531 with a peasant named Juan Diego, whose encounters with a woman depicted as an Aztec princess but identified as the Virgin Mary set in motion a tradition that over time placed the Americas under the protection of Mary as “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” Juan Diego’s cloak, imprinted with an image of the woman, carried December roses to the local bishop as proof of the authenticity of the visions. The cultural and religious impact of the tradition of a simple peasant challenging European colonists can be celebrated as the triumph of meekness over dominance. It was a brilliant reconquest of the Conquest.

In 1980, four American churchwomen were martyred in El Salvador for their ministry to the poor and displaced victims of a brutal, repressive regime supported by the United States. Their deaths became known as “Roses in December,” witnesses to the power of meekness over domination. It is an unfinished story and a promise deeply imprinted on the region still waiting for God’s ultimate verdict on the long history of the abuse of power. The disciples of Jesus who live the Beatitudes are

faithful witnesses to these events, as are those who labor to end racism and eradicate nuclear weapons.

Jesus revealed the source of his power when he said he was meek and humble of heart. He invited all those who labor for peace and justice to get in the harness of his obedience to a meek and humble God. We share there his rest and his burden. Isaiah proclaims in today's first reading:

They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar with eagles' wings. They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.

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