Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17: 21).

Wis 7:22b—8:1; Luke 17:20-27

Veteran's Day

If there is a patron saint of pacifists, Martin of Tours could be a candidate. He is best known for an act of kindness as he was returning from a campaign in winter. On horseback, he encountered a half-naked beggar and used his sword to cut his cloak in half to share it with him. As the story goes, Jesus later appeared to Martin and revealed that he was that freezing beggar on the road. Martin became a monk, then a bishop for the city of Tours and is now one of the patron saints of France. His feast day coincides with Veteran’s Day in the United States.

In the history of Christian pacifism, Martin takes his place alongside two other fourth century contemporaries who contributed to the dilemma of religious justification for war. Emperor Constantine found divine reassurance in a vision of a cross of light in the sky before a military victory that advanced his path to the throne. St. Augustine, a bishop like Martin, laid the groundwork for the Just War Theory that linked Christian patriotism and military service in a way that has typified church-state

collaboration for centuries.

This link was on display during the funeral for General Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Washington National Cathedral last week. His eulogies included the reading of Micah 6:6. “The Lord has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Today’s first reading offers a beautiful image of Wisdom as an exquisite, intelligent woman who sees all and knows all, for she is the very light within the divine. We might think of this feminine genius as the one voice at the table trying to resolve conflicts that lead to war and the unleashing of death and destruction. In today’s Gospel, Jesus describes the reign of God as powerful and beyond human control as lightning flashing from one end the sky to the other. Yet it works invisibly within the human heart and spirit. God’s Will is always among us if only we will listen.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem before his own death, he wept over the city for its failure to avert the coming disaster that would claim over a million lives. “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:42).

Like Martin’s beggar, the crucified Jesus has a way of reappearing in the victims of war to probe our consciences and rally us to pursue peace while there is still time. As weapons grow larger, more destructive and available to anyone, we must keep pace with diplomacy and self-control. History teaches that small differences lead to global confrontations, and that, once begun, wars justify themselves.

Martin used his sword to clothe a poor man against the bitter cold. His act is a parable filled with wisdom we need now more than ever.

NOTE: https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day has an excellent bio for St Martin that sorts out fact from legend.

NOTE: Yesterday's column suggested that the Supreme Court had already ruled on the right of inmates to have a spiritual support person in the death chamber when they are being executed. This case is still pending. I regret the error and pray for the imates this ruling will impact.

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