

Lent 2015

“Deliver us from the silence that gives consent to abuse, war and evil. Grant us the desire, and the courage, to risk speaking and acting for the common good.” (Taken from the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN, Litany of Nonviolence)

If the gospel story tells us anything about Jesus' life it is that he can't be accused of the “silence that gives consent.” His words and actions were clearly ones to bring attention to the upside down world where the Temple scribes and priests wielded the same abuse as the civic authorities. Whether it was turning over the tables, criticizing behavior and tending to the needs of the lepers, Jesus gave expression to his life of integrity, truth-telling and love. It was Providence at work. Jesus, like us, believed in what was not yet, but believed in the possibilities of what ought to be for the sake of the common good.

In Matthew's (MT:21-12-16) version of the same story it is the children's reaction that tells the tale. The children got it. They understood the significance of the action that day in the temple. Think of their joy to finally see an adult speaking out against the injustices that they and their parents had to endure and would be punished if they did what Jesus did. It's no wonder they jumped with delight. However, not so the scribes and the temple priests. And, we know the rest of the story.

Unfortunately 2,000 years later Jesus' experience of triumphalism, self-righteous attitudes and restrictive laws are still in full plume. Today it is the Palestinians who have lived on the land for centuries continuing to pay the price. Recently an 8th Day Staff member returned from a delegation to Israel's West Bank. She told the story of accompanying children going to school in Hebron and routinely being stopped at the military check points where the armed Israeli soldiers harass them for official papers before letting them pass.

This particular day, when the school children were stopped, several of them began throwing rocks at the tin barricades that to their squealing delight made loud pings for all to notice. Not to be upstaged by children the soldiers responded by shooting off canisters of tear gas at the crowd scattering them and all those watching. The children's act surely comes from the belief and hope that what ought to be but is not here yet, is still a possibility.

Provident God of all possibilities give us “the courage to risk speaking and acting for the common good” to the many local and global injustices. From Ferguson to Palestine our voice of hope, truth and resistance needs to be heard. May It Be So!

*Kathleen Desautels, SP
Chicago, IL*



*Lent 2015
Women of Providence
in Collaboration*