



Grain

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Maya Angelou

Submitted by Vernita Kennen, Roseville, MN

Field

14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. John 17:14-19

Thoughts

House Chaplain Patrick Conroy, a Jesuit priest who has been serving Congress since 2011, resigned his position in response to House Speaker Paul Ryan asking him to leave. Ryan accepted Conroy back after the chaplain rescinded his resignation. Conroy said that he had never been disciplined or reprimanded and that he'd never heard a complaint about his ministry, well except after his prayer while Congress was debating a tax overhaul. His prayer included a plea for a “guarantee that there are not winners and losers under new tax laws, but benefits balanced and shared by all Americans.” After Conroy’s November prayer, Ryan said, “Padre, you just got to stay out of politics.” Talk about the power of prayer in the public square. “I am not asking you to take them out of the world,” said Jesus.

The chaplaincy drama brought to mind stories about some pastors who read the Beatitudes on the Sunday the reading was assigned in the last lectionary year, and were accused of choosing that lesson to attack the president. We don’t endorse or lobby against political leaders, and the ELCA stands in favor of keeping the Johnson Amendment. We are willing to support and challenge anyone in any party according to our values, but as a church we don’t have a political party; we have the Gospel. If a reading about the poor in spirit being blessed or a prayer about benefiting all people, offends us, maybe we are lifting political figures or an ideology above God. We have all created idols and are mixed with sin and righteousness, even while trying to do our best. Let us pray for God to uncover our blind spots with mercy, and when we know better we can do better, as Maya Angelou says.

Jesus prays for his disciples as he sends them into the world. The path they’ll follow will be one of resiliency even in the face of forces that try to stifle the Word, one of disappointments and broken hearts, and of always returning to hope. Let us open ourselves to God in our prayers and work in the world; don’t be afraid of the power that comes with that. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly Recommended

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy