

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jul 14th 2015

Today's reflection takes me to three places.

Remembering St. Kateri Tekakwitha reminds me of a number of Native Americans, from the Lakota tribes of western South Dakota in the U.S. They have great devotion to her. She brings them hope when they can feel quite forgotten. "One of us has become a saint!" I've heard them say. And, the annual Tekakwitha Conference gathers tribal people from around the U.S. and Canada to share their faith and the issues which challenge them. So, today, we can ask Kateri to intercede for those in our midst whose ancestors are native to this continent. The very underpinnings of their culture were taken away, with devastating consequences. They have suffered much. Many have been strengthened by their faith in Jesus, trusting that God is with them and hasn't forgotten them. May Kateri continue to offer hope and grace, healing and community, vision and mission for all native and tribal peoples.

In the first reading, we have the story of Moses' birth and how he was rescued, to become the one whom God would use to set his people free. Many of us would have little trouble recalling an example of how we have been rescued in some way or another - from something quite bad (at times, something of our own doing, at other times, something that happened to us). As we look back, we can sense, feel, acknowledge that we were truly saved from something. And, upon reflection, we can give thanks to our God who was with us in it all and who gave us a new start, a fresh beginning. I have the privilege of experiencing that every week, when celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a parish. So often people come in to the sacrament, quite bound or quite ashamed or not knowing how to move forward. To watch God's grace work, in such a personal and liberating way, offering pardon and peace, is to witness the rescuing love of our God. I know I couldn't possibly walk with any hope or trust or sense of mission without an affectionate feeling of gratitude for having been rescued and given a new beginning by God's unconditional Love.

In the gospel, Jesus seems quite upset. I always try to pay attention when Jesus is showing great emotion. I have to ask, "Is he talking to me?" The historical reality Jesus is dealing with is quite applicable to us today. He has literally worked miracles in some of the towns he has visited and brought the Good News of God's love. And the response has been quite disappointing. When I was reading Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Our Care for Our Common Home*, I got to the part where the Holy Father lays out this incredible story of what has happened to our planet and to the poor on the margins everywhere, and how the evidence of the degradation is so clear, and so much of the world seems not to want to respond. We deny that we are to blame and we sure don't believe we should have to change our consumption patterns to save anyone else. There is too often an indifference to the suffering and the chain reaction of consequences. I wondered what Pope Francis would do at that point in his letter. I was getting discouraged myself. I was so surprised and comforted, inspired and lifted up, because Francis expresses deep hope. There is hope that some people are responding. There is hope that small, local efforts are making a difference. There is hope that a number of conferences have

raised the issues to a transnational level. He sees hope in the fact that many are beginning to see this as our common home and that dialogue is beginning. And, I see hope that Pope Francis is calling us to this dialogue and to a personal, local, national and international response, His heart must be full of grace. Even though he knows it will be a slow response, he trusts that God will bring healing and peace, rescuing us from what we have done and what we have failed to do.

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