

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Oct 29th 2015

There is a remarkable Jesuit priest in the USA, California, Fr. Gregory Boyle, SJ. He has assumed an astounding mission which he discerned after he buried the 50th young man from his parish. Each of these deaths was due to gang warfare.

He decided not to stay inside his rectory, preparing the next young man's funeral. He went out on to the streets to begin to know his folks, including the gang-bangers. He quickly learned that one key impediment was keeping the men in the gangs was the lack of jobs. He started a bakery: Homeboy Bakery, which later became Homeboy Industries as they added products and services.

Fr. Greg, known affectionately by his homies as "G-Dog," persists in a person-by person search for the one word or experience that will acquaint his young friends with that piece of the Holy Spirit that exists within each of them. Once they catch a glimpse of this, and most have had it systematically beat down in them by horrific life experience, new life can be nurtured.

Today's Epistle is a familiar one. Paul writes to the Romans and to us, "If God is for us, who can be against? ...I am convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God."

We have countless opportunities to join in our own search or assist another in the discovery that no matter what, God is not separated from us. How do we go about this?

In the late '70s, I heard Fr. Greg speak in person. He was just getting started, but already the results were gaining attention: former gang rivals suited up to bake bread together, measurable returns to real lives, legal job histories being written, and so on. Someone from the audience asked him his "secret." "How do you get to these kids," he was asked. Giving God the most credit, he said this about himself. "I show up and learn names," he said.

Not a bad place to begin for any of us interested in spreading the news that God is with us and never will be separated. Let our journeys begin!

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