

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jul 14th 2017

Memorial of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Virgin

I had the privilege of attending a Pilgrimage of Trust with brothers from the Taizé community in St. Louis last May. The brothers facilitate one of these every year, I believe, by working with a community in need of healing for one reason or another. The weekend focused on “heartfelt trust” of one another, of those we considered “the other,” and of God. I had previous experience with Taizé prayer and the ecumenical monastic community in France, but it was not until that weekend that I understood how central the charisms of “heartfelt trust” and reconciliation were to Frere Roger, the founder of the Taizé community.

One of the brothers told a story about Frere Roger as the community began. It was a radical idea, a small ecumenical monastic community. There was a group of Germans who wanted to build a monument in France as a symbol of reconciliation after World War II. Frere Roger had already decided to tell them they couldn't build a big monument at Taizé. He didn't want something ostentatious. But when one of the brothers told him, just before he met with the German group, that they had been all over France and everyone had told them “No,” Frere Roger immediately said, “But then we must say yes! We must offer the opportunity for reconciliation when the desire is there.” So the German group built a large church at Taizé, holding 1500. When he entered the new church, Frere Roger sank to the floor. “This is a disaster,” he said. “It's much too big! We will never fill it.” A few years later, 6000 people were at Taizé for Easter. “We must provide space for all of them!” Frere Roger said. They knocked out one wall of the church and put up circus tents to cover everyone. The original church has been expanded several times.

It is the theme of trust that resonates with me from the readings today. God tells Israel “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt.” The psalmist sings, “Trust in the Lord and do good.” Jesus says to the disciples, “Do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak(s) but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Walking into the unknown, whether it be Egypt or the villages of Israel, a new place to live, a new job, a new relationship, can be scary. In today's readings (and every day) we are invited to choose heartfelt trust in God anyway.

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