

Homily for the 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 23-24, 2019

Readings: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

Preacher: Sr. Janet Korn

If you were looking for a challenge, we certainly have one in today's Gospel. Forgive your enemies; love those who don't care much for you; bless those who swear at you; give away the coat that you love. Jesus presents us with a demanding call to care for one another in every possible way.

This reading comes at a very good time, especially as it relates to our national scene. I am aware of my personal struggle to love some people who make up our national government. I have names for them that I dare not say out loud. And, I am sure that they must have some for me. I don't believe I am alone in this struggle. It is very hard to even pray for the gift of caring and listening.

At the same time, we know that nothing positive will happen if we just continue to dislike one another. Many people have spoken about their own families and how they avoid talking about politics; even spouses are on different sides of the table. It may be the time to pray for the grace to calmly talk to someone who thinks differently; to try to understand why the person thinks the way they do. All conversations don't have to end with people yelling at one another.

As I wrote the words above it was eight o'clock in the morning on January 20, 2019. I was in the Rochester airport. The snow was up to our knees and I wasn't going anywhere. I was supposed to catch a flight at 8:30 a.m. to Chicago and from there on to El Paso, Texas. Of course there was no flight. As I sat there, not knowing what to do, there was an announcement that a flight to Chicago was going out at 5:15 p.m. I said to myself, "I have the whole day so I will give some thought to the Feb. 24th Gospel readings."

At 2:00 a.m. the next day, in the dark, in El Paso, Texas, a taxi cab driver and I were circling a building on foot trying every door we could find. Finally one opened, and I was forever grateful for human error that forgot to check that door and to the cab driver who went way out of his way to help me out! I went in and slept with the migrant community who had long ago settled in for the night. The

next day I was moved to an old convent of the Sisters of Loretto directly across from Casa Navidad.

Monday morning brought a busload of people from the office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Young dads clasping the hands of their sons and daughters; young moms doing likewise, cautiously got off the bus. All adults had “ankle bracelets.” They were calm and quiet, yet not totally aware of what was going to happen to them next. They had suffered enough. A very long, exhausting trip north, followed by days in custody and now another step on their way to a country they hoped would welcome them.

They waited in a long line in silence until they heard a cherished word, “bienvenidos,” welcome, and then they smiled. The outpouring of love and care they received revealed Christ’s love and care for them. Only love without ifs, ands, or buts, can free another from fear, anger, even hatred. The migrants felt accepted, even wanted, as part of the North American family. They were given a glass of water in His name, food if they hadn’t eaten, along with verbal clarification about the next phase of their journey. At Casa Navidad the immigrants were put in contact with loved ones in the United States who had offered them lodging and transportation to get to their new homes.

There are several Casa Navidades in El Paso, each with a different name but with the same mission of loving beyond the boundaries. They originated when immigrants were dropped off by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in downtown El Paso. The immigrants were coming from Central America and they had no idea where they were and they had no food or money. The people in El Paso rallied once they heard what had just happened. An empty school building offered warmth; doctors arrived with medicines, the police offered transportation, churches prepared food and the immigrants were welcomed with open arms. That generous spirit continues to this day. Love and selflessness continue to dominate over name-calling, rejection, dismissal and rebuff. Love dominates!