


<p><i>Sunday Readings:</i></p> <p>Exodus 17: 8 – 13 2 Timothy 3: 14 – 4:2 Luke 18: 1 – 8</p>		<p><i>Homily by</i></p> <p>Father Jon Pedigo Pastor</p>
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Does God Take Sides or Do We Take the Side of God?

In the first reading Moses holds up his hands in prayer while a battle is waged. Moses and the Israelites win so long as Moses holds up his hands toward God in supplication. When Moses tires and lowers his hands, his side loses.



The persistence of Moses, Aaron and Hur made victory possible. One could make the assumption that God takes sides. But before we isolate this passage and use it as a pretext for waging a holy war against our enemies, we had better consider the question: *Does God Take Sides or Do We Take the Side of God?*

First we need to look at Moses' hand position in the battle. This position suggests that God must be at the center of the conflict, not the political agenda of Israel. Moses' hand position is at once a symbol of supplication and penance. Since God is the God of all creation, having God at the center of any conflict signifies that the enemy Israel is fighting is really a brother, a sister, mother and father. This further suggests that any violence Israel perpetrates against the enemy is violence perpetuated against themselves.

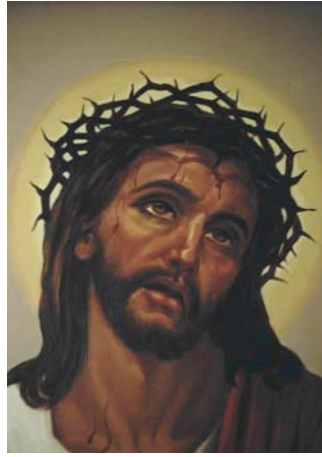
Moses' hands must remain raised because when he lowers his hands, Israel dehumanizes its enemies. With Moses' hands lowered, the enemy wins because Israel has diminished the humanity of those that they fight by torture, imprisonment, and harm to non-combatants. When Moses lowered his hands, God was no longer at the center of the conflict, but rather the selfish and vain political agenda of the tribe. When such power is at the center of a battle, those who wage war are doomed to fail.



This passage is troubling – especially in the context of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, the impending fundamentalist insurgency in Pakistan and the troubling occupation in Iraq. Have we lowered our hands? Despite rosy press releases of a so-called “turning point” in the war, independent reports indicate that violence is escalating. At home, we see the effect of placing POWER in the center of the conflict rather than God.



We have dehumanized the enemy: two years ago it was torture at Abu Grahیب, today it is the independent security forces killing civilians. What will tomorrow bring? At home we increase the restrictions against ourselves: we build walls, construct more prisons, limit free speech of dissidents, and create scapegoats to blame for our troubles and to mollify our conflicted conscience.



Jesus calls us to look at our conscience and rather than wage a battle with others, he calls to look within ourselves. He bids us to look more deeply at the intentions within our hearts: to look at the tendency that we have to distance ourselves from others so that we can label a brother or sister as an enemy. Our interior struggle must be as persistent as that widow was to the judge. We must be persistent and unrelenting in our examination of social conscience. We cannot allow our hands to fall.



Our social conscience reminds us that our true nature is love, not hate. Our social conscience reminds us that fundamentally we are connected to Amalek, to the Muslim, to the immigrant and anyone with whom we try so hard to disconnect.

The Table of Christ develops my social conscience. As I come to this table and as others join me here, Christ as the host of this liturgy reunites me with others from whom I have been disconnected.



My social conscience is my *Christ Consciousness*. And in Christ, I must go beyond the fabricated categories of good and bad, friend and enemy, evil and sainted. I have to see that all of us are fundamentally connected, not disconnected.

My Christ Consciousness reminds me that as I preach on justice for the immigrant, I must also love those who would deport my sister or brother. As I preach on peace, I must also love the war-monger. My Christ Consciousness tells me that unless I love all people, I will remain engaged in a cycle of conflict that never ends. Christ transforms relationships of enmity and competition into relationships of love and cooperation.



For a minute, imagine if all the warriors on the field were to hold their hands up in prayer just as Moses. Swords, spears, and shields drop to the ground. Chariots and charioteers stop in their tracks. The blood on the field ceases flowing. The warriors lift their hands one by one and acknowledge God and their common humanity.

Imagine peace today.

