

Homily February 9 2025 © Teresa Elder Hanlon

(Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 4:38-44)

Where is the woundedness in us, how do we come to see it and how does transformation come about?

When I was in my late twenties I was confirmed into the Catholic Church in Ft McMurray. Shortly afterward a nun and several parishioners of the church there, invited me to a course in Calgary with the Linn brothers, Jesuit priests and theologian Sheila Fabricant. It was called *Healing the Eight Stages of Life*. Many of my wounds from childhood were remembered and prayed into over the course of that week.

On the last day of the course, the hundred or so participants were gathered into circles of about 5 people to ask and pray for spiritual gifts for each other. I wasn't too sure what this was about, but I had noticed in my life that I was sensitive to the hurt in others, and at the same time, I seldom reached out or did anything about the pain that I noticed. So that was the gift that I asked for: "To see the hurt in others and to act on it."

The next week I was at the Ft. McMurray tennis club and a pregnant woman had had an argument with some of the other players over their children's behaviour and was standing alone outside the courts, weeping. I didn't know the woman, but I was compelled to go over and found myself walking directly toward her. When I got there, I offered her a hug and she told me the story of her tears. That request for a gift of *acting on the hurt that I saw* had obviously been answered. Something in me had been healed – maybe a fear of rejection? At the same time all the prayer at the retreat, and especially the prayer for that gift, had energized the Spirit of love in me, or as Paul says, "Creator's great kindness".

In this month of remembering the sick, there are two themes I noticed in today's reading – healing of wounds and the follow-up to that healing: a desire to go out and proclaim the good story of God's love.

Isaiah is well aware, when he undergoes an experience of the powerful sound of the angels singing, that he is very small in comparison to God's greatness. He knows his "unclean lips". He feels unworthy. He also knows the erroneous ways of his people, perhaps his upbringing. He doesn't call for help, but a seraphim, one of the angels in his vision, flies over with a hot coal in a gesture of cleaning, purifying, changing his lips, and changes his message. The ritual makes him into the prophet he was and still is in the scriptures today. Living out God's word in the world is not so much about trying to be good as it is receiving and being energized by the Spirit.

Paul, too, in this letter to the followers in Corinth, speaks of his dark past, hunting down and killing Christian families. And his life takes a dramatic shift when he is struck blind by light and the sound of Jesus' voice which calls his name and then calls him out on his behaviour: "Why are you persecuting me?" Paul makes the point today that it is his contact with the Spirit of Christ Jesus that makes him go out to spread the good story. It is "Creator's great kindness at work in [him]".

It is, as the psalm says, the awe and wonder of Creator's power and love which can ignite people to bring about goodness in this world in the name of Jesus.

And we see in the gospel that Jesus, too, when he is overwhelmed and tired out, feeling weak in his human state, that he goes away to a quiet place to pray, to listen. Those hours of rest and

prayer, connect him with the Spirit's energy. And what does he want to do when they come to get him? He wants to leave and spread the word further. To tell others the good news that Creator's love is there for everyone, that mercy and forgiveness are bountiful and that people can be set free from their pain.

A contemporary example of someone who has moved through generational woundedness and is now proclaiming good news is Dr. Niigaan Sinclair, an Anishinabe professor at the U of Manitoba and son of Hon. Murray Sinclair. He's the author of the book *Wînipêk*. This past week I listened to his lecture from 1 year ago in which he was asked to assess what the legacy of the current Trudeau gov't will be. To listen to Dr. Sinclair speak, one detects no hatred, no crying, no need to ridicule. He is grounded in goodness and able to articulate prophetic statements of truth and love according to his culture often with humour. I recommend listening to this talk¹ as a lesson in the difference between colonial and Indigenous governance. His attitude speaks to the power of Mother Earth to heal a people even through genocidal trauma. I am grateful for Dr. Sinclair spreading the good news of what reconciliation can look like.

The gift to see the hurt in others and act on it continues in my life to this day. It is not just people's pain, but pain in the world, in the environment as well as lives of oppressed peoples that I've learned to see. The action may be as simple as marking the date and putting on an orange shirt to remember oppressed and colonized people who struggle for rights and to recognize months like this one – Black History Month. To educate ourselves. We can speak out from love, like Isaiah, Paul and Jesus and ask that the Spirit, "Creator's great kindness," guide us in our everyday actions. As Pádraig Ó Tuama says "I propose having ways of living that ground, accompanying what is, and attuning attention to say what is most important when it needs to be said."²

QUESTIONS

Tell a story of when you were energized to speak up or speak out or
What have you heard lately that is Good News?

¹ Niigaan Sinclair lecture on Justin Trudeau legacy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gk2emERBFM>

² "The Lessons of Trees", February 9, 2025, Email correspondence from Pádraig Ó Tuama.