

"Upon Reflection . . . " A Message from Fr. Gordon
1 May 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

At the end of St. Matthew's Gospel, in a passage known as "The Great Commission," Jesus says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (28:19-20). The scope and breadth of Christ's calling couldn't be clearer: All the world is the territory of God's redemption; all people are to share in the same gift. Echoing the prophet Isaiah's earlier command that Israel become "a light to the nations" (42:6) the Great Commission is, both in word and spirit, a thoroughly global vision.

I'm reminded especially of these words of scripture when I consider the state of our nation and our world today. In rhetoric and policy, the current administration in Washington has sought drastically to narrow our involvement in the work and vision of the larger world, clinging instead to a nativist "America First" ideology that values boundary security over sanctuary and welcome, exclusion over a sense of common purpose and shared goals. The President seems more intent on creating a border wall than in building social and moral bridges across racial and cultural divides, more eager to massage old hatreds and resentments than inspire respect between diverse peoples. And this divisive spirit is being echoed across Europe as well, where the alarming rise of racist and fascist groups have resulted in, among other things, attacks on immigrants seeking asylum and on their places of worship.

Interestingly, it took the recent visit of a foreign leader to remind Americans of the inherent dangers of such a divisive, isolationist outlook. Speaking to a joint session of Congress, French President Emmanuel Macron gave a full-throated defense of multilateralism while recounting the many ways that our two countries and the rest of the world have benefited from working together in the past. From alliances that have swept back tyranny to ones that have spurred economic growth and prosperity, we have been stronger when we've been united in a common cause and weaker when we've sought to isolate and exclude. "Closing the door to the world," he warned, "will not stop the evolution of the world. It will not douse but inflame the fears of our citizens."

This may, of course, seem a purely political argument. Yet the work of embracing the world, with all its struggles as well as its opportunities, is finally a spiritual task. Feeding the hungry in far-off places, joining in efforts to save our environment, contributing to organizations that advocate for refugees and immigrants, demanding justice for those wrongly imprisoned—all these actions draw their inspiration from the single source of God's calling to us, from ancient times, to be a light to the nations, reaffirmed by Christ's sending forth of his Church in transforming love through the Great Commission. We are citizens of a country, but we are also citizens of the world. We are truly a global community in body, mind, and spirit, a union of hearts and souls seeking to do God's will while on this earth.

Many blessings,
Fr. Gordon +