

When listening to the theme song from the TV series Monk the other day it dawned on me what I have been feeling in the world around me. The words from the song are this: *It's a jungle out there ... disorder and confusion everywhere. No one seems to care, well I do. Hey, who's in charge here? It's a jungle out there.*

This has been a disorderly year filled with confusion and craziness ... It seems at times our Illinois government has gone to rack and ruin ... They should be focusing on solving problems and serving the people instead they spend much of their time playing political games and seeking partisan advantage. And the tribal feud on Capitol Hill is getting worse.

Then we add the disorder and confusion left by Harvey and Irma ... people in Texas and Florida without homes, the deaths and injuries. Hurricane Maria turned Puerto Rico into complete shambles, no water, no electricity ... horrible to imagine ... devastating to watch. The killing of 59 people and injuring of hundreds more in Las Vegas, a major disaster. And then we throw the nuclear bomb into our lives. And that is just what is happening in our country.

It is a jungle out there ...  
And who is in charge here? We are.

In our Gospel this morning Jesus makes it very clear: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom." In other words if you screw this up it will be taken from you. Harsh words from our Lord ... because Jesus takes our work as Christians very seriously, even at times when we don't.

Not to fear ... we are being lead by God and God has given us a plan ... Yes, God has a plan for each and every one of us and that was revealed to us this morning in the first reading, the Ten Commandments. I am not sure if I ever thought of this as a plan as such for my life ... I think I thought of it as a set of rules and regulations to abide by. Something if I followed I would be a good person and if I don't obey the rules I can ask for forgiveness and God will forgive me, something personnel. But it is more than that ... it is a plan for all of God's people ... how we are to work as a whole following the plan, the blueprint, to build the kingdom of God here on earth. These 10 commandments require all of us.

I am suggesting this morning that we do a couple things to assist God in making this world a better place for us and our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren.

First of all we can follow the plan which will bring great joy into our lives even in the midst of sorrow and grief. The Joy that can bring light into the world and can b shared with others. How is this possible? To be among sorrow and to have joy. By following the plan. Love the Lord your God. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor ... by thinking of others.

It was explained this way In the book The Book of Joy by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu. "We try so hard to separate joy and sorrow into their own boxes, but the

Archbishop and the Dalai Lama tell us that they are inevitably fastened together. Neither [of them] advocate the kind of fleeting happiness, often called hedonic happiness, that requires only positive states and banishes feelings like sadness to emotional exile.”

In other words ... we are not talking about finding happiness in things and people ... we are talking about the joy we receive by self-understanding, meaning, growth, and acceptance, including life's inevitable suffering, sadness and grief. Dalai Lama went on to say “Too much self-centered thinking is the source of suffering. A compassionate concern for others' well-being is the source of [joy].”

When reading this I immediately thought of one of our parishioners, Maggie Attiyeh. Every summer for two weeks for years she has been volunteering at Special Days Camp. The first week is camp for children with cancer and the second week is for their siblings. Maggie has told me that his has brought such great joy so much so that at times she feels guilty. I am sure we all have received this joy in our hearts ... talk to the parishioners who help the people in Appalachia by fixing and rebuilding their homes. Hard work but I am sure they receive great joy. When you are surrounded by hardship and sorrow and assisting in working through that with the love of God we receive great joy. I am not talking about being happy. We all have times of fun and happiness playing with our children, shopping, eating, drinking, traveling, etc. All might bring happiness for the moment but the true joy does not remain.

I am talking about the light of true joy in this world and share that with others by thought, word, and deed.

The other day a woman in my water aerobics class came up to me as I was entering the water and said “the people of God have got to do something”, my heart broke, she was sad and hopeless,

This encounter brought on my second suggestion this morning ... and I don't want to sound too much like a general here but I agree ... We, the people of God, have got to do something. There are many harmful things we can't do anything about in this disorder and confused world to stop, such as hurricanes, but we can let our voices be heard ... we can share our feelings, suggestions, and concerns to the people running our state and country to perhaps let them know we insist on more kindness, compassion, and fairness in this world.

We can all unite as one following the plan God has given us to share our joy, helping let the light of God lead the world. We can also unite as one to let our political leaders know how we feel, morning, noon, and night ... every day, every week, every month.

Theologian Walter Brueggeman in an interview I heard lately stated, concerning the plight we have in America, for him it wasn't that people had to recall the value of the 10 commandments but instead, what is more important, is for them to see they let another group of commandments supersede those, namely the Bill of Rights. We have let the interpretive dance of the Bill of Rights leap and plea into our lives. We are dancing to another drummer here on earth and we must take it back ... and give it to God.

It seems at every sermon we are given marching orders ... ideas and tools to make our life a light for all those living in darkness ... we have great outreach ministries and great fundraisers

to help financially those we aren't able to be there for. We were told last Sunday to take up that staff and strike the rock that has been keeping us from doing what God wants us to do ... breaking it open to release the love of God in this world ... the great wonderful glorious love of God.

Let us take our staff and use it to hit some of the politicians over the head (figuratively, of course) and let them know with our input how we feel about how they are running our state ... our country. Call, text, email them your thoughts ... complaints ... suggestions ... and compliments ... add that to our outreach ministry.

I have provided an information sheet for you today to make this so easy to add to your favorites. You will have your US and Illinois representatives – Senate and Congress, your president and vice president. Whenever you hear anything or think of something that you would like your representative to know or have questions about ... It doesn't have to be lengthy, I just ask that you be kind. They will just be a click away.

If you don't know how to do this let me know and I will come to your house and put it on your computer. If you don't have a computer, let me know and I will find out who your representatives are and give you their phone numbers and addresses so you can call or write them. I am also suggesting that you share this with your friends ... make copies of this information sheet and hand it out to visitors and neighbors ... If you want more copies let me know and I will be happy to get them to you. Let's get our voices heard.

On the first episode in the television show West Wing (I believe this might have been in 1999) the president was on vacation ... while he was gone things got a little lax in the White House ... there was an incident that started that morning with Cubans in make-shift boats coming to the US and everyone was up in arms as how would they be treated when they arrived at the Florida shores. Later in the day the president got back ... with the staff in his Oval office going over much of what went awry while he was gone he was given a note, he read it out loud: "1,200 Cubans left Havana this morning, 700 turned back because of the inclement weather, 350 missing reportedly dead, and 150 are in custody seeking asylum" ... he then looked at his staff and said... "nothing but the clothes on their back they came through a storm and the ones that didn't die want a better life and they want it here ... talk about impressive – my point is this ... breaks over" [let's get to work].

Jesus has made it very clear today that we are the gifted tenants of the vineyard of God – we are reminded what the consequences of neglecting that tenancy will be. We must work in tending the vineyard and use the 10 Commandments as our blueprint, God's will for us.

In the book Here I Am a book about a Jewish family. There is a story about a young boy studying for his Bar Mitzvah ... they were talking about the broken tablets of the 10 commandments and how they were placed in the Arc and taken with them wherever they went. The Rabbi asked the children in the class why do you suppose they took them with them ... Some responses were because they were God's word, they were important, they were carried because they were a reminder of our sinful nature ... then one boy said ... no, they carried them because they were theirs.

These commandments are ours ... reminding us of not only to love our Lord our God but to love God's people and do all that we can do to light up this world in times of darkness and

despair by sharing that great joy in our hearts. Let's light a fire under our political leaders and let them know we are out here and we expect them to do the job they have been given ... that is to take care of God's people in an honorable and just way.

Kind of a strange sermon this morning ... talking about us maintaining a joyful heart and working with our politicians. But when we keep God at the helm and we keep to the plan all things are possible. God, please, Bless America.

---

### Finding your Government Officials

#### United States

act.commoncause.org

It might go right to the website then type in your address

or you might get more options, if so

click on "Find Your Elected Officials – Common Cause"

Type in your address

Save to your favorites

#### Illinois

illinoispolicy.org

There is a map for Illinois Senator and Illinois House

For each type in address in "Search"

Click "Search" and Save it to your Favorites

You might want to put the phone numbers and email addresses of your State and Federal officials in your phone.

<http://www.elections.il.gov> Has a lot of information about our Illinois government

The Common Cause website is also loaded with information on what is happening in Washington. You can sign up and get notices in your email of what is going on ... you decide for yourself how you feel about what is happening.

Please contact me if you need any help with these sites or if you would like me to get the information for you.

Linda Lutter

847-340-3253

[lindalutter@hotmail.com](mailto:lindalutter@hotmail.com)

S