

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

A BRUISED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK

By Sr. Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

Today's Gospel

The Pharisees went out and took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. When Jesus realized this, he withdrew from that place. Many people followed him, and he cured them all, but he warned them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom I delight. I shall place my Spirit upon him, and he will **proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not contend or cry out**, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. **A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench**, until he brings justice to victory. And **in his name the Gentiles will hope.***

MATTHEW 12:14-21

Reflection

In the Gospel today, Jesus kept quiet upon realizing that the Pharisees were plotting death against him. Why did Jesus not confront the Pharisees? Was he afraid or intimidated? Was he showing weakness?

In our society today, silence when confronted or avoiding arguments means weakness. But that's not what it meant for Jesus. Jesus did not show combativeness, aggression, or haughtiness. Jesus, instead of arguing with the Pharisees, decided to "lay low." Though he laid low, he did not hide himself -- especially from those in need of healing. He still healed those who were sick. He suffered together with the broken. He demonstrated meekness, not weakness. There is a gentle strength in his meekness. Jesus showed how to hold the tension, that tension of being ridiculed and plotted against by the Pharisees, and of waiting for God's appointed time, while showing great mercy to the people around him. Did Jesus also show mercy to the Pharisees? How?

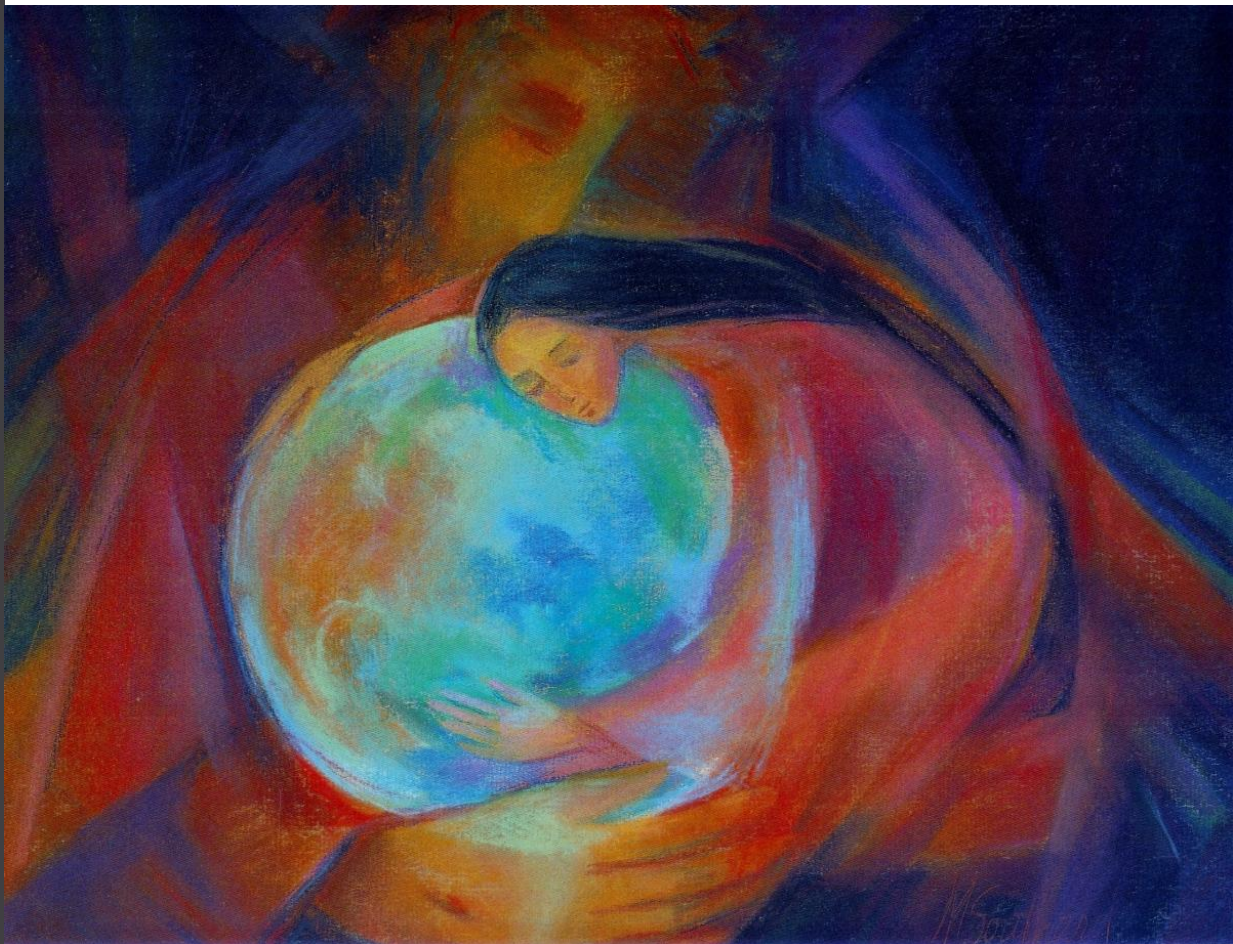
The readings of the past few days spoke about Mercy and our call to be merciful. Today, Isaiah is quoted in the Gospel describing Jesus, the personification of Mercy.

What is Mercy? Gleaning from Isaiah's description of Jesus, the Messiah, Mercy is justice: **"He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles."** There's simplicity and quietude in Mercy and it does not boast, does not use a bullhorn or clanging cymbals to proclaim itself: **"He will not contend or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets."** Mercy is compassion, gentleness, kindness, forgiveness, sympathy, pity, and love all rolled into one.

"A bruised reed he will not break." We are the bruised reeds. Think of our woundedness, our brokenness. There are times when we are just bent down, heavily burdened by our sufferings. During these times, Jesus/God does not break us. Instead, he looks at us with compassion and desires to relieve us of our suffering. He gives us strength if we call on him. He abides and does not abandon us. I picture God wrapping us in his arms, pulling us close to his heart.

"A smoldering wick he will not quench." When the fire within us weakens, when the light within us dims or when we are feeble, Jesus does not extinguish the flames in us. Rather, he sustains us, helps us along with the fire of His Spirit.

"And in his name the Gentiles will hope." Because we receive Mercy, there is hope. Hope that leads to gratitude and gratitude expressed in showing mercy to others. Sometimes we succeed in being merciful, sometimes we fail. And that's all right: Mercy understands.



Compassion, courtesy of ministryofthearts.org
Image by Sr. Mary Southard, CSJ

For Pondering

- Reflect on the words of the gospel. What words strike or touch you?
- What is your understanding of mercy?
- Recall an instance when you experienced God's mercy. How did it change your relationship with God?

For Prayer

*Please, O God, wellspring of charity,
Breathe on me the fragrance of your mercy.
Refresh my soul and dwell in me
So I may spread your sweet aroma to all humanity.
Amen.*

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