

If you've spent enough time at a Jesuit parish or at a Jesuit school, you will probably hear the phrase "Men and Women for others". It gets printed on banners and in publicity materials. It *often* gets associated with doing service or helping somebody in need. It's a very nice phrase! "Men and women for others". The line is from a speech that Pedro Arrupe, the former head of the Jesuits in the 60s and 70s, gave to a gathering of Jesuit Alumni in 1973.

When this line is put into the context of the whole speech it is given so much more depth. Throughout the speech Arrupe is challenging the whole idea of what it means to be a disciple. (pause) My favorite part of this speech is at the beginning because the challenge he offers is so direct. He says:

"Today our prime objective must be to be men and women for others; men and women who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors; men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce" (pause)

Men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce." That adds a *little* more depth to the phrase "men and women for others". For Arrupe this wasn't a *radical* idea, this idea is steeped in Scripture, very much like the scripture we read today. (pause)

In the first reading we hear the Prophet Amos announce "**Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land!**" and in the Gospel we hear "**you cannot serve both God and mammon**".(pause) Mammon is dishonest wealth, a greedy pursuit of gain. God is calling out those members of our community who are leading lives that don't align with God's vision for us. Now maybe we aren't cheating people out of money, or stealing from them. I would guess that most of us gathered here tonight, live pretty good lives all things considered. But, but there are probably things in our lives that contribute to that tension of following God completely. Jesus is warning us in this Gospel to become *aware* of those things that we rationalize when we tell ourselves, oh yes I'm a Christian, but this part of my life though has *nothing* to do with that. The truth is (pause) God wants every part of us, (pause) God wants every part of our life.

Last week, we heard the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, highlighting that mercy God shows us, as glimpsed in the father's mercy towards his son. We have all received this unearned grace of Mercy at different times in our lives. Sometimes it comes when we need it most, sometimes at unexpected moments. (pause) This grace changes us. The mercy we have received should lead us to action, to others. When we know we have been so loved by God, our response has to lead to love of neighbors, especially when we encounter issues of injustice. It is not enough to "care about others" in a general sense and to not be greedy. (slowly) God wants our lives to be filled with mercy and justice for others. Each of us gathered here today, has a unique call from God to *respond* to injustice. For some it might be welcoming migrants and refugees to this area and helping them become a part of this community. For others it might be advancing a consistent ethic of life around issues of abortion and the death penalty. For still others it looks like organizing events such as last weekend's parish forum, The Earth is crying. At that forum, one of the panelists, Zeyneb Magavi said something that has stayed with me. Zeyneb is a scientist and started her talk by saying she didn't want us to "believe in Climate

Change”. She continued saying its not about belief, but about *understanding or not yet understanding* what is happening. (pause) I think the same can be said about God’s mercy. Jesus is telling us these parables to help us *understand* in a deeper way what God wants for us. It is not an accident that this week’s reading about not being able to serve two masters comes right after the prodigal son. Jesus wants us to *understand* the depths of God’s mercy and how that should change our lives.

The more we come to understand God’s mercy and desires for us, the more we are challenged to change. (pause) And here’s the good news for that, we are not doing this alone. We gather together to pray around this altar every week. We come as families, as single people, as professionals, as musicians, as retirees, as students, We come together because we know we cannot understand God’s desires for us without being in community. We come together to experience God’s mercy for those times when we place other things before God. St. Paul has that great line to Timothy today “it is my wish, then, that in every place people should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument”. We do this over and over again, when we come together to challenge and support each other.

Towards the end of the speech I mentioned at the beginning, Arrupe says “to be just it is not enough to refrain from injustice. One must go further and refuse to play its game, substituting love for self-interest as the driving force of society.” “substituting love for self-interest as the driving force of society”. God deeply desires that each of us gathered here, allow our lives to reflect God’s love and mercy. It’s a process of understanding that, of making mistakes, of becoming aware of our blindspots, of recognizing injustices around us, and letting God and the people of God transform our lives.