

Blessed Are the Peacemakers ...

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (MT 5:9)

This beatitude is direct and simple – those who “make peace,” who resolve conflicts, who bring about reconciliation, are God’s true children, for they fulfill the will of their heavenly Father – that God may be all in all.

To be a peacemaker, it is not enough to contribute to a general sense of prosperity, of a feel-good atmosphere that life is pleasant. Rather, a peacemaker is one who does the hard work of coming face-to-face with conflicts and divisions, searching for common ground in opposing value systems, then challenging opponents to build on the shared values that can become the foundation of a true and lasting peace.

Often, a peacemaker is not fully trusted by either party to a conflict, since each fears that the peacemaker’s actions favor the other side over his own. Allaying that natural suspicion is but one of the obstacles the peacemaker must overcome. Another is determining which declared principles are truly core values for each side and which are posturing for a perceived advantage. And once some common ground is identified, the peacemaker must persuade the respective parties of the mutual benefits to be attained through the reconciliation process.

But before one can attempt to make peace between others, one must experience peace within oneself – being at peace with other persons in one’s family, one’s community, one’s workplace. And most important, being at peace with God, whose will the peacemaker is trying to accomplish. A person who is not at peace internally, who is conflicted between selfishness and loving outreach, between doing good and doing evil, will hardly be able to make peace with others.

The inclusive translation “children of God” loses a bit of the meaning that was found in the earlier English translation “sons of God.” The people of Israel were called “sons of God” in the Old Testament – it reaffirmed their unique Covenant relationship to God. To say that the peacemakers will be called “sons of God” is to say that they are true Israelites, sharers in the Covenant, the ones of whom God said, “You will be my People and I will be your God.”

There is certainly no shortage of opportunities to be a peacemaker in our time. Each day’s news bears witness to conflicts that exist in so many countries, throughout our nation, and in our own communities. The fact that we cannot make peace everywhere is no excuse for not trying to make peace anywhere. If we make peace with even one person who is in conflict with us, it’s a start. If we join with others who are working for a peaceful resolution to some conflict, that’s one more peacemaker in action. If we contact one of our elected representatives at the state or national level to urge them to vote in support of a peace-promoting action, that’s one more voice for peace. The Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, Laozi (also, *Lao-Tsé*), observed: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Although perhaps a small beginning, little by little our actions can help advance the cause of peace, and thus we will merit being called peacemakers, the true children – sons and daughters – of God.