

11<sup>th</sup> Monday of Ordinary Time “A Provocative Recipe for Peace”  
Fr. Frank Schuster  
June 15, 2020

Every so often the Church offers us a pairing of readings at a daily mass that, taken together, become particularly challenging. Today is one of those days. Jesus says that we should offer no resistance to those who are evil and to turn the cheek when we get hit in the face. I have heard a number of commentators over the years try to water this down by talking about how the use of hyperbole was a common rhetorical device in Jesus’ day, and so forth. However today, the Church pairs this Gospel reading with a horrific reading from the Book of Kings. Jezebel and Ahab abuse their power in a most egregious way, framing an innocent man so that they could take his vineyard after he is dead. Jezebel hatches this plan to frame Naboth in a most sociopathic way by telling Ahab, “Eat and be cheerful. I will obtain the vineyard.”

It is as if the Church is telling us today, what does turning the other cheek look like? It looks like living with a terrible injustice on par with what happened to Naboth. However, more is going on in both readings. Both of these readings are teaching us to trust in God’s sense of justice over our own. Sure, we can take matters into our own hands but how often in human history has that gone wrong? A lot of times our sense of justice is more about “just us” than what God’ understands as justice. For biblically minded people, justice is not about receiving fairness wherever we go but rather about being in right relationship with God. When it comes to justice, we need to allow God’s will to prevail, not our own. This is why Jesus tells us to turn the cheek. In addition to teaching us that radical non-violence is the best way to achieve justice in our world, he also wants us to trust in God’s sense of justice over our own. In the Book of Kings, Jezebel and Ahab eventually incur God’s justice. In the end God always wins, but this requires a lot of faith on our part and no shortage of patience.

And so, I think a helpful reflection for today could be, what are the moments of injustice we have had to deal with in our lives? Think about it. If you live long enough, we all have moments when we are treated really unfairly. We can carry these memories and hurts around us our entire lives and can really become bitter as a result if we are not careful. What does it look like to “turn the cheek” as we reflect on these injustices we so often brood about? What does it look like to trust in God’s sense of justice rather than our own? If we did this, perhaps we would understand the power of the cross in a new way. Perhaps, the readings today give us a provocative recipe for peace.