

## 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2017

Aug. 20, 2017—Her name was Heather Heyer. She was 32 years old, bright, happy, and passionate about life. Just last Saturday (Aug. 12) while attending a rally in Virginia, she was murdered by a young man, similar in age, who ran his car into a crowd of protesters. What a tragic loss, what a sad commentary on our nation, and what an occasion for each of us to reflect on the power that is ours to love or to hate.

Just a few days later (Aug. 17) thousands of miles from our shores, another senseless attack in Spain reminded us of the presence of evil in our midst and the damage that can be done when it is unleashed.

Let us be clear, there is **nothing good** about Neo-Nazis, **nothing good** about haters of Jews or of African Americans, **nothing good** about the **KKK**, or a **terrorist** who plows through an innocent crowd. There is **nothing good** when someone denounces others of different races, creeds, or backgrounds because each person is created in the image of Almighty God with gifts and talents, with dreams and hopes, and with the possibility of doing great things. But, since that first bite of an apple in a garden called Eden, you and I are given the choice about what we do—whether to follow the good and live it, or to seek out the **bad** and live that. That cunning Satan of ancient and evil fame is still poisoning hearts and taking over lives as our world continues to spiral downward in most frightening ways.

What is the message to each of us? How do we face our days when terror seems to loom on every side and each news cycle brings another message of death and tragedy?

My friends, Our Blessed Lord in the Gospel today (Matthew 15:21-28), and in fact in every Gospel, highlights for us the power that He, and only He, **can right every wrong**.

The woman who approached Him that day knew that her daughter's illness could be overcome by the power of His love. Her persistence wins His praise and then His healing touch. The same is true for us and for our nation and world. The illnesses that befall us now, the bigotry, hatred and violence, the loss of innocent blood, and the lives ending with tragedy can only be stopped by our fervent prayer to the God of peace and our persistent and powerful witness to stand up for what is right and good. Your freedom of speech **ends** where another

person's rights **begins**. And so, the Almighty did not abandon us, but sent us His finest warrior of all to battle **evil** and provide us with His message of love and hope, kindness and peace. The Cross of Calvary, as tragic as it seemed, was not the ending but the empty tomb was—as **goodness** won—and it always does!

And so my friends, today at Mass and every day, let us pray for peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our nation, in our world, and in our lives. Let us be proud to **stand up for goodness** and ask the Good Lord, who **is** goodness, to guide us and help us, for without Him we certainly will be lost.

God love you.