

I want so badly to think of Jesus as the Prince of Peace, but the Jesus of Nazareth in any of the Gospels, is anything but that, especially, as Matthew recounts his ministry. Just before his encounter with the chief priests and elders in this morning's Gospel reading, Matthew recounts that Jesus threw down the gauntlet by entering Jerusalem triumphantly, mocking the Romans. He, then, upturned tables in the Temple, chasing out the money changers and those who sold doves, doves being the only sacrificial animals the poor could afford. My desire to want to think of Jesus as the Prince of Peace is because I know that so many who have been practicing their faith for a while have come to believe in him in this way, and I want to uphold, support and affirm that image of Jesus in your minds and hearts. But, I can't, and if I speak true to my conscience, I'm glad that I can't despite the competing desire to please because Jesus the Warrior is showing us the way through death. I'm glad that I must speak of Jesus the Warrior who is portrayed in Matthew's Gospel so clearly in this role. There is no doubt in our minds that at this part of the gospel, Jesus is full speed ahead toward the Cross. And, this is significant to understanding Jesus the Warrior. Death is part of his victory. He is showing us as stripped down of himself as he can be before death, that death is the least important part of what he was doing. Jesus knew he was going to get killed, not because that was the will of God, but because it was the will of the society in which he lived. Uprooting the tables of the economic foundation of the Temple sacrificial system which fed the wealth of the elders and the chief priests was going to get him killed. I don't think Jesus wanted to die, he just wasn't afraid to die to change the relationship of the leaders with God. He wasn't fooled by their chicanery to get him to blaspheme by saying his authority was the same as God's authority. And, in fact, he turned the table to force them into admitting that it was. Yet, despite their trying to trick him, he still offered them the opportunity to change their minds about their relationship with God. This is what the parable of the two sons is about. If the dregs of society, tax-collectors and prostitutes, could change their minds, then, surely, the noble could as well. And, he was throwing in their faces, that despite the Roman death machine that was going to kill him, there is life after death. In resurrecting Jesus from his death, God showed us that life is on the other side of dying. The life that is in good relationship with God does not die. Good relationship is defined by going to work in the vineyard even though you said you weren't. Being out of relationship with God is saying, 'yes' to God, but not doing the work God requires. Forcing poor people to buy turtledoves to sacrifice for their redemption when they could not put food on their tables was not being in good relationship with God. Jesus was more than prepared to die to change this situation in his world. Are we prepared to die to change relationships with God in ours?

Death must occur to change our relationships with God and with each other. And, as we have said before, it need not be physical death, but death of a part of one's self that prevents that relationship from happening.

When two people are in relationship leading to marriage, they each realize differences in each other that could potentially prevent the marriage from happening. But, their love is so strong for each other, they are willing to give up parts of themselves that might prevent the relationship from continuing. This giving up is allowing parts of themselves to die to form the new life of their relationship.

When a group of people come together to form a community, such as our Church, we know that upon deciding to become part of the community, we may not all agree on everything. We may hold beliefs that are diametrically opposed to someone else's beliefs. But, to be in relationship with God, we are willing to act and speak on our beliefs so as not to offend others so we can be in community with them. In doing so we allow part of our individual freedom to die to be in relationship with a community that is in relationship with God.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul so eloquently spoke on how to be in relationship as a community when he said 'be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.'

Community, union, one. Being in community means being one with others. Being in this place of community requires changing one's mind to be able to be of one mind as someone else. This does not mean that we have to agree on the same things all the time, but it does mean that we have to have a

process in place that is going to lead us to agreement, and that we understand that obtaining that agreement, we are each going to have to give up something. We are going to have to let something we held onto, die. We are going to have to change our minds, perhaps not totally but enough to be in community. Paul continues: 'let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.' Paul describes the mind of Jesus as 'emptying himself, humbling himself, obedient to the point of death.' To live in community means to change oneself by subsuming one's self for the community.

Mother Barbara and I, and several other members of the parish are reading the *Rule of Benedict* which Mother Barbara has mentioned in her sermons. We talk about this book so much because it is acutely affecting how we perceive being in community not just at St. Andrew's, but in our day-to-day lives.

We are learning what it means to empty one's self, to humble one's self, perhaps, even letting part of one's self die in order to be in good relationship with God. It is changing how I approach being part of a group. A natural Chatty Kathy, I felt I had to talk my way into relationship with any community I was a part of. I still want to talk, because that is partly how I process my thoughts, but I have learned to humble my mouth to my ears, and listen first. My thoughts are forming differently. I don't know whether they're better thoughts, but they are formed not by talking, but by listening. My need to speak right away is dying. I am learning to humble myself to what other's say. I don't know whether this is better for the community of people I'm with, but I am in better community with them.

One of the things I think St. Andrew's and other churches are going to have to do to be better communities is to change our minds about what Church is. We no longer live in what I call the Ozzie-and-Harriet age: when women worked in the home and home was around the corner from church. For the past thirty years, both men and women work outside the home, and home is, at least, ten miles from the church. The church community has changed, and how we decide to be in community must change. We need to discern with whom we are in community: is it just us, or is it with the people who live in the neighborhood of our church. How are we in community? We can no longer make decisions the way they were made in the past. Those ways have died. We must learn how to make decisions about being in community that shows respect for the old ways, and lives into our new realities. We must redefine what commitment to this community is, and create ways for keeping that commitment whether it is to ourselves or to others with whom we live. Take the case of Coffee Hour. It is no longer just a time for networking, but a time in the diaspora of our Church community, where Church continues. Coffee was kiddingly referred to as the 'third sacrament', but truly coffee, grapes, crackers and cheese and cupcakes are. As Coffee Hour is the largest gathering of our community of faith outside the sanctuary, it is the opportunity to live into our good relationship with God with each other. It is the real-life enactment of the unity of the communion table, where we can practice our faith on each other before taking it out into the world as change agents for Christ. It is a time and place where we can become better acquainted with each other so that we can learn how to become more of the 'same mind', and therefore, be in better community with each other.

Being in better community is what I think Paul was saying 'of being of the same mind'. We each have to humble ourselves, empty ourselves, let part of us die to be in good community with each other. Let us allow ourselves to be changed by our being in community with God and with each other, being of the same mind as Christ Jesus, emptying ourselves of old ways to move into new life. Amen.