May 21, 2017  
Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17  
1 Pt 3:15-18  
Jn 14:15-21

by Mark Pranaitis, C.M.

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:17)

With all the attention good works (almsgiving, service, etc.) get during Lent, it might be good to remind ourselves that the resurrection isn’t suspended during those 40 days and then somehow reconstituted on Easter. We only can live our lives in the light of the resurrection no matter the season. Thus, good works are the year-round hallmark of the followers of Jesus.

Jesus reached out, touched, and ate with those who were on the margins and welcomed them into the fullness of life. In doing so he incurred the wrath of many in power. Yet he also changed the hearts of many of their hearts too.

Consider Zacchaeus who was moved to conversion from his predatory ways by the ministry of Jesus. (Luke 19) While he is not a character in this Sunday’s readings, he serves as an example of what can happen when we pray for others to “receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:15) having been graced with the Spirit ourselves. Our efforts towards justice and peace then have a multi-directional approach: struggling for justice and peace with those who are beaten-down by oppressive systems and praying for a redeeming, converting justice and peace for those who are oppressors, those system creators and keepers. What would our world look like if those hearts were changed?

Let’s find out by praying for the conversion of those who cause suffering while not neglecting our more conscious and direct methods for helping them hear the cry of the poor.

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