

08 OCTOBER 2017

## *Living within a vision of God's justice*

THE REV. WINNIE VARGHESE

*"The kingdom of God will be taken away from you."*

— MATTHEW 21:43

When I hear these words about tenant farmers, stewards, scheming to get more than their fair, legal share, I can't help but think of sharecroppers, serfs, peasants, landless laborers, migrants on every continent through the ages, wondering what it might take to create some security and stability in their lives. Surely the first people who heard this story were more likely to be like the tenants than a landowner.

Where is the kingdom of God in that? And what is this kingdom of God that we have already that can be taken from us?

In this reading from Matthew, and in all of the readings, it is clear that there is a law and also a parallel or critique, a law from the tradition, that is the way of the kingdom of God, the world as God intends it.

What does the Bible tell us are the attributes of a society living within a vision of God's justice?

In your context, does the law support you if you wish to live within that vision?

The virtues of the reign of God's justice, the world as God intends it to be, are clear in the Hebrew Scripture: The love and awe of God are illustrated by a just society. A just society has God at the center. A just society is marked by law that enshrine fairness toward one another; compassion and generosity to those who cannot fend for themselves; and right stewardship of the earth.

These are clearly difficult values to apply in

### **For reflection...**

- What might it mean that even in the time of Jesus the ways of the powerful seem arbitrary, and laborers resisted?
- Is there a difference between an owner and a creator/maker?

real living. In 2017, as in the time of the Hebrew prophets, we can feel like wackos at the gates of the palace as we try to proclaim these values.

As Christians, living as though the law of God is the law of our hearts is the work of our lives. We listen and bring the breadth of our experience to these texts, and we are convicted by them.



The Rev. Winnie Varghese is the Director of Community Outreach for Trinity Church, Wall Street. She has been a priest for 17 years in parishes and as a college chaplain. Before joining Trinity, Winnie served as rector of St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery, a vibrant and diverse church in Manhattan that tripled in size under her leadership.

# JOURNEY TO GENEROSITY

2017

*Sunday, October 8, 2017*

*Witness by John Mazur*

I am John Mazur. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, I enlisted in the Navy; my first duty station was at Pearl Harbor. My life's work has been 42 years teaching, some of which was on Pacific Islands including a remote island in Truk District, Federated States of Micronesia.

I was born, baptized and reared as a Byzantine Rite Catholic, a cross between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Over the years I strove to understand my relationship with God. Many places where I lived had no Byzantine Rite church. I explored several religions and found God everywhere I looked. In all religious venues, I became involved. I believe that one must become an active part of the church family in order to grow in Christ. My religious journey has not been a journey with a single moment of revelation, an epiphany, but rather a gradual learning experience resulting in an understanding of my relationship with God.

Most of the wonderful experiences in my life came about when I let God make the choices for me, experiences that I hadn't sought or planned. For example, without my asking, Esther Davids invited me to a 7:30 a.m. service at Emmanuel in October two years ago, shortly after I moved back to Oahu. Before long, Amy, Evelyn and Rita "adopted" me. Now we four reconvene at McDonald's after service and kick up our heels.

Emmanuel is truly a welcoming place even to us non-Episcopalians. You are truly supportive people. At Emmanuel, I feel at home. Being retired, my treasure is finite, but I am able to share my time and talent more generously. I'm in the rota to read the lessons and I'm responsible for altar flowers every third month. I've worked at the Chocolate Extravaganza fundraiser behind the scenes, and I participate in the Saturday work sessions from time to time. My community involvement centers around theatre including the Hawaii Opera Theatre as a volunteer. I introduced performing arts at the Windward clubhouse of the Boys and Girls Club. I thank you all for supporting this organization with monetary support for the past two years.

The more one is involved in the community and in church activities, the fuller and more rewarding is one's life. I beseech you to become as generous with your time, talent, and treasure as you can be.

God has blessed this church. God bless us everyone. God bless America.