

September 13, 2020 | 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

[SIR 27:30—28:7](#)

[PS 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12](#)

[ROM 14:7-9](#)

[MT 18:21-35](#)

Thad Crouch

In a [podcast interview](#), Jason Jones, pro-life human rights activist, tells of a face-to-face meeting with Janjaweed Al-Qaeda warlord to end his raids against Christian Dinkas in Sudan.

The warlord was angry and distrustful. So Jason said, “Brother, I’m just here to help my nieces and nephews. . . . I know brother, you’re a big, strong man. If I was... in a predicament and I needed you to help my children, I could count on you, right brother? So that’s what we’re here for. I’m here for my nieces and my nephews.” Then this Al Qaeda affiliated warrior embraced Jason. Then they did what the Just Peace Ethic calls “breaking cycles of destructive conflict and violence” with honest conversation acknowledging harm and responsibility on BOTH sides — including the Christian Dinka thefts of Janjaweed cattle. Activists generously offered to meet some Janjaweed humanitarian needs of the in exchange for a truce agreement toward peace.

Had Catholic U.S. Army Veteran Jason Jones, the Christian Dinka, or the Muslim Janjaweed not moved beyond anger and distrust — or refused to admit their own harmful acts, those two groups in that area might have kept killing.

Jason says [he’s the “worst person” he knows](#). He explains that he is aware of his sinfulness and his own inner dark thoughts in ways that he cannot fully be aware of other people. That’s one of the things that enabled him to become who he needs to be to do what he is called to do.

Awareness of our sins, God’s mercy, and God’s love for us can awaken and humble us to forgive and love others. God can help us become “woke” to justice, mercy, and love beyond politics; to “see” where once we were “blind.”

Recall Matthew 25, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty...or in prison, and not minister to your needs?” Those blind souls thought they could love God and neglect people.

[The Act of Charity/Love](#) prayer connects God’s love to love for others and the love of others to forgiving others: *O My God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.*

It’s easy to be blind to socially acceptable sins and violence in our time. Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Bur dueled with pistols. Bur couldn’t forgive Hamilton. Hamilton valued pride above life. Today we easily see duels and race slavery as sins against life and dignity as they’re no longer socially acceptable.

To which contemporary socially acceptable evils are we blind? Systemic racism? Abortion? The Death Penalty? Environmental destruction? Is modern warfare's death toll less evil, unimaginative, and stubborn than dueling?

What about putting individual freedom above the common good and true freedom: freedom from selfish drives and fears that hold us back?

That showed up when some boaters were blind to their combined wakes 'impact on others 'safety and property. It shows when "freedom" for urges reproductive rights are valued more than the psychological welfare children, marriage, family, honesty, love, and even the lives of unborn children. It shows when profits are valued above God's gift of creation and when luxury, social status, and privilege are valued above the dignity of racial justice. It shows when business-as-usual is more important than preventing deaths; when preventing local death turns a blind eye to foreign vulnerable people-of-color deaths by hunger due to local reductions in a global economy based on exploitation.

There's so much insulting, ridiculing, and even dehumanizing political opponents. We can refuse to work for racial justice with those who support abortion. We can refuse to protect unborn life with someone who said something racist or thinks climate change is a hoax.

Wake up to the mercy and love God has shown us sinners! Have mercy on others swept up by socially or politically acceptable sins. We can get past anger and distrust. We might listen to each about issues that touch God's heart beyond politics. We can help each other notice blindspots to sin. We can "forgive all who have injured us" and work for the common good "for the love of God" within us.

Perhaps what's most daring about praying the "Our Father" is that we ask God to forgive us to the degree we forgive others.

Do we dare to pray it together today?

Lord, have mercy!

Thad Crouch produces Choose Life Abort War Podcast for Peace, coordinates this Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Linking the Lectionary to Justice and Peace Project, and serves on both the Social Ministry Committee and Respect Life Ministry team at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church in Austin, Texas.