

## Pastor Writes

Greetings to you all. The theme for our morning's meditation is that 'Strife and violence are the result of human sinfulness, from which Christ came to save us.' Even as we look around our world today violence, whether it be in our own country or city or within a family is rampant. In the world ISIS have been beheading people and have been holding hostages and creating chaos. In our borders whether it be Pakistan or China there are border skirmishes and intrusion by troops into our nation. Closer home in Delhi itself we have had numerous attacks on Churches. With the recent one at St. Alphonso's church on Monday 2nd February. Violence and strife can also be seen within families, between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends. Today is healing Sunday, and as much as we recognize the need for physical healing we also need spiritual healing to save us from strife and violence.

We see that even since the fall of human being in the garden of Eden violence had spread around the world. In Genesis chs 4-11, we see the global spread of sin and violence and that the inclination of the human heart is always evil. It is in the midst of this backdrop that God chooses a particular person called Abraham, at a particular time, in a particular place for the sake of all humanity. He calls Abraham and makes a covenant with him in order that all the nations would be redeemed to Yahweh through him. Through Abraham the nation of Israel is called to be a light to the nations around and Israel was unable to fulfill that role.

The reading from the Old testament book Judges, reminds us about a period of history ruled by the judges, particularly about Abimelech. Abimelech murders sixty-nine of his own half brothers in order to become the king of Shechem. The argument that Abimelech uses is, it's better for one man to rule over them than the seventy brothers, and that the rule of a relative is preferable to the rule of outsiders. Very often we see the same kind of logic applied in many of our work spots and institutions. Nepotism and selfishness only leads to strife and violence. But how do we deal with strife and violence?

In the Gospel reading we see that Jesus is arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, as Judas brings a large crowd with swords and clubs. Judas greets Jesus with a kiss which was a preplanned sign of the man they needed to arrest. Peter immediately reached for a sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest cutting off his ear. Jesus tells him, 'put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.' Jesus reminds Peter that Jesus' way of overcoming strife and violence was the way of the cross. The cross is something which takes in all the violence of the world and sets us free from it.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds us that Christ is the one who saves us from all violence and strife. All of us were under the wrath of Christ but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive in Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace that we are saved. Paul also reminds us that Christ, through his sacrifice creates a single new humanity. Those who are far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. All those who put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior become the new humanity. The church is the body of Christ and we are the Church, we are therefore called to exemplify this new humanity.

Christ is also our peace. God has reconciled us into himself through Christ. The relationship with God and with other human beings has been restored because of the cross of Christ. The cross teaches us the unnatural act of forgiveness. We are called to forgive rather than retaliate in violence. May we this morning take time to thank God for sending us his Son Jesus to heal us in mind, body and spirit.

*Shalom*

*Paul Swarup*