

MIDWEEK LUM DEVOTIONAL FOR OCTOBER 12, 2022

THE COVENTRY LITANY OF RECONCILIATION

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race
from race, class from class,

FATHER FORGIVE

The covetous desires of people and nations to
possess what is not their own,

FATHER FORGIVE

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our envy of welfare and happiness of others,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,

FATHER FORGIVE

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,

FATHER FORGIVE

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God

FATHER FORGIVE

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

BLESSED THOUGHTS: "MY FRIEND, CAN YOU FORGIVE ME?"

Is there any institution as sinful as the Christian Church? Go to Las Vegas and the casinos will willingly part us from our life savings, if we're stupid enough to let them. But when it comes to real theft, no one has ever equaled Popes Nicholas V and Alexander VI with their infamous papal bulls called "The Doctrine of Discovery," issued in 1455, which allowed and encouraged European monarchs to colonize any "non-Christian land" they happened to "discover." Portugal, Spain, France, and England took full advantage of this license to steal and kill and enslave, as one after another they took over the New World.

The Doctrine of Discovery was the international law that gave license to explorers to claim vacant land in the name of their sovereign. Vacant land was that which was not populated by Christians. If the lands were not occupied by Christians they were vacant therefore could be defined as "discovered," and sovereignty, dominion, title and jurisdiction claimed.

However, North America was far from vacant when European explorers began arriving. When Christopher Columbus arrived on October 12th, 1492, the lands were indeed occupied by perhaps fifty-four million Indigenous Peoples in North and South America. But, as they were not Christians, they were not considered humans. And so began a great genocide, which led here in Canada to the Great Tragedy we know as Residential Schools and Unmarked Graves. Here in Manitoba the number of Indigenous children taken into foster care is way beyond what it is for other children. And the tragedy is that when I was a student in America, we were taught to celebrate this day, October 12th, as Columbus Day, the day when Columbus "discovered" America. My God, how could we be so stupid?

Which brings me to today's question. I ask my fellow Indigenous citizens, can you forgive the Christian church? Can you forgive the Canadian government? Can you forgive me, for I am both a Christian and a Canadian, and though I am thoroughly sickened by our history, I know I am also responsible for helping God heal this tragedy!

There is an even greater question. Can we together, with God's help, achieve Reconciliation? I don't know how many years I have left, but can we make progress to that goal, together?

I was once asked why I like to conduct worship services at the Lutheran Urban Ministry. This is also a sad question, because I led the last in-person service in March of 2020 before the pandemic shut us down. I thought about that for a minute. I answered, "When I place the communion bread in people's hands, I know I'm just lending my hands to Jesus Christ, so He can feed his people and give them enough of His life so they can live theirs." I am never so close to our Lord as I am at those services. But, in a sense, I have no right to that closeness unless you all can forgive what our ancestors did to your ancestors, and what our grandfathers did to your grandfathers, and what we're still doing to one another.

Christopher Columbus! His first name means "He carries Christ." Well, he carried death and slavery to the Carib Indigenous people, and they are no more. Columbus is no hero to me. He deserves no day of celebration. But what we all need is a Day of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. And there is no greater prayer than the one Jesus Christ prayed for us on the Cross:

Father, forgive.

—written on September 21st with profound sadness in my heart