

## HOMILY

### *The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time* *July 18/19, 2009*

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In June of 1987, former President Ronald Reagan spoke in front of the Brandenburg Gate at the Berlin Wall. In his speech, he issued a direct challenge to Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Soviet Union.

“General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

Twenty-nine months later, Mikhail Gorbachev did allow Berliners to destroy that wall, and soon after, the Soviet Union collapsed. Tear down this wall! “Something there is,” said poet Robert Frost, “that doesn’t like a wall, that wants it down.”

St. Paul knew about walls. In our lesson today from Ephesians, he writes that Christ Jesus has broken down the dividing wall of enmity. Paul is referring to a wall that stood in the Temple of Jerusalem. The wall was about three or four feet high. It ran through the court of the Temple, The purpose of the wall was to keep Gentiles from entering the inner court into which only Jews were permitted. There was a sign which warned anyone who wasn’t a Jew that entering this area was punishable by death. It was a wall of discrimination, religious discrimination. Paul calls it a dividing wall of enmity.

People are still building walls of discriminations, walls of hostility. Can we not see the insanity of people’s inhumanity to people? Why must we hate? Why must we kill?

There are many veterans in our land who bear scars from the Vietnam War. Not only physical scars, but emotional scars. They served their country honorably, but they came back to a nation that was divided. No hero’s welcome for many of them.

Instead many of them were jeered and scorned. Many already had doubts about their own role in the war which made it even harder.

Bishop William Willimon once told of hearing a man, a U.S. pilot in Vietnam, tell of his experience in that terrible conflict. He told of bearing down on a Vietnamese village to drop his bombs. As he pushed through the clouds, he caught a glimpse of a church. The man said, “It must have been Sunday because I could see a crowd of people entering the church in the village. It was only a glimpse, but I could see it clearly. They were Christians. Nobody ever told me that Vietnam was a Christian country. It could have been my hometown, my Catholic Church. They looked just like me. They worshipped the same way I worshipped. Nobody told me.”

You don’t deal with such memories easily. Many of our veterans still carry many hurts. War is hell. That is why, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.*” Christ came to bring peace. Christ came to reconcile us to one another. And he came to reconcile us to God. Christ says to us, “Tear down this wall!”

In a recent report, IQs are rising worldwide, as much as three points per decade on average. We’re getting smarter, the report says, but that doesn’t mean we’re becoming better people. Unfortunately, a rise in IQs is not linked to our capacity to love one another.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, between 100 million and 160 million civilians lost their lives in massacres of some kind. That’s an average of more than three thousand innocent deaths per day. Pope John Paul spoke about how there were more martyrs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone than all those martyred in nineteen centuries since the time of Jesus. And the pace has not slackened in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Statistically speaking, the fact is the world is full of hate. No problem facing us today is of more importance.

With the advent of global terrorism hanging over us, no problem is of greater importance. But how shall we be reconciled to one another without first being reconciled to God? And how are we reconciled with God? St. Paul says it is by the cross of Jesus Christ.

There is an amazing video clip on You Tube by an Evangelist named Louie Giglio. You might want to look it up online. Go to Google and simply type in Laminin (L-A-M-I-N-I-N).

What is laminin?

In plain language, laminins are what hold us together—literally. They are cell adhesion molecules. They are what hold one cell of our bodies to the next cell. Without them, we would literally fall apart.

In his talk on You Tube, Louie Giglio talks about how inconceivably big our God is—how he spoke the universe into being—how he breathes stars out of his mouth. Then he goes on to speak of how this star-breathing, universe-creating God also knitted our human bodies together with amazing detail and wonder. He goes on to remind us that we can trust that the God who created all this, also has the power to hold it all together when things seem to be falling apart. How our loving Creator is also our sustainer through the tough times.

Then he tells us about laminin—these cell-adhesion molecules that hold us together.

What is amazing is what laminin looks like. The structure of laminin is the same as the structure of a cross. So, the glue that holds us together, all of us, is in the shape of a cross. It's the powerful metaphor of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Through the cross, he holds it all together.

Tear down this wall! Christ has come into the world to reconcile us to one another and to God. Open your heart this day to the one who truly holds it together.

