

August 10, 2017

- *Societal and human challenges*
- *Listen with the heart*
- *Anger comes from fear*

The dear and present God, whose presence is marked by full and endless love, is part of what illuminates your many paths at this moment.

We see your concerns. We recognize the anxiety that characterizes much of your thinking. As was acknowledged earlier, it is God's wish that you understand that in the grand picture within the great circle of what has been, what is, and what will be, love is becoming stronger. Peace is becoming stronger. It is at moments like this when you express your concerns that you are drawn more poignantly to reach out to one another and to be open to evidence of God's presence.

Faith triumphs most especially in times of great difficulty. When you think back to theologians and writers who have been occupied by a vision of what it means to be alive, those writings have been most influential when they were shared during times of great stress. Some of your greatest collective insights occur in those moments in time when you may feel most threatened. Profound understanding often is the result of profound concerns. When life goes on with little challenge, there is minimal impetus to gain deeper understanding. But when life presents reason for great concern, it is out of a feeling of thirst for understanding that meaningful insights are manifested.

Human life and society evolve in similar ways. No human life is characterized as being in total comfort at all times. The most meaningful lives in terms of insight have come in moments of great challenge. It is exactly so when considering worldwide challenges and potential crises. When you feel yourself in heightened concern for where to go, how to move ahead, how to avoid catastrophe, it is at those times that you gain the greatest understanding. Society moves in fits and starts just as individuals do. The impact of nations in conflict resonates of course more broadly than when an individual is experiencing such turmoil, but the principle is the same.

We often say that you grow through your challenges, that you grow, you learn, you develop when you are often experiencing great anguish. Society also grows. It is not to say that there is no reason for concern, for there is indeed good reason, but it is more important to understand what your response to those concerns can be. It is not appropriate to "stick your head in the sand," so to speak, and ignore what is going on around you, for nothing is gained. The peace that one might feel in so doing is false and short-lived.

When you experience such concerns, it is always helpful to ask what it is that you are most concerned about. What creates the greatest anxiety? And then ask yourself what can be learned by what you are experiencing. Sometimes what is learned is that you as individuals or you as communities or nations discover a resilience of which you

August 10, 2017

had no knowledge before. That resilience is not necessarily that you are stronger to win the fight but that you are strengthened through your faith. It is faith that is the most meaningful and permanent strength.

The strength of nations changes. No country has always been dominant. No nation can anticipate permanent dominance. Ultimately just as is true for people, nations must learn to listen to one another. We are not saying that nations must learn to agree any more than we are asking you to agree with your neighbor, but you can listen, and listening involves energy flowing in two directions. One direction is purely receptive listening without judgment, but the other component for such listening to be helpful must be a commitment to express what is actually believed.

If two people are in an honest conversation over difficulties they experience, it does little good if one listens and the other has nothing to say. For the listening to be beneficial, an individual must exercise the freedom of honest expression. Such honest expression has no benefit if the other is not listening. Energy must be exchanged both ways.

Your nation feels some collective anxieties. Those anxieties may be with politicians or with international relationships, but for those difficulties to be resolved, there must be total openness to expression and openness to listening.

How do you get to such a state of mutual openness? Such a state is not achieved arbitrarily or easily by the turn of a switch for real listening and a real openness to express what is felt to take place. Sometimes the parties must be brought to the brink wherein there is no reasonable reconciliation without dialogue. If you bury your head in the sand and refuse to acknowledge that the brink exists, no communication of real value takes place. Both individuals, both parties, must recognize that it is finally in their own best interests to listen and to speak without reservation, without judgment. There must be a sharing. This is the only way to resolve conflict between people. Conflicts melt away, and honesty and openness take their place. The resolution of tension in life is the same regardless of the level that such strife may be felt.

Often we have emphasized in these messages that you can be a loving presence in the life of another simply by being there and listening. You do not have to always give advice. Your thoughts and preferences do not always have to dominate and prevail. A quiet and receptive listening is often the most profound gift you can give to another. It is a gift that frees another to be open and honest in expression, and it is a gift to yourself, for you understand in the most significant way possible where another person is on his or her own pathway. Relationships between communities, between nations, or between individuals are merely different expressions of the same basic truths. If you listen with an open heart, another can express with an open heart. If you listen judgmentally, another feels that restriction, and the free expression that is needed is not possible.

August 10, 2017

We speak of seeing with the heart. We could expand that very easily to ask you to listen with the heart, because in that listening you see more clearly. The listening belongs to the seeing.

When there is conflict, when there is suspicion, when there are false beliefs or suppositions that characterize the views of one party toward another, there is only one way forward and that is through the heart. It is through prayer. No prayer is unanswered, nor willingness to be open to listen. Even when you are not conversing with a national leader, that opening of the heart allows you to hear not what is said but what is meant. Listening with the heart means listening to the meaning someone else may have. You may agree or disagree with the meaning, but judgment has no place, for what is being meant is a reflection of what is being felt. Words are merely representations of what is inside, and they are very inaccurate.

When anger is expressed, you are aware of the anger, but you must be aware of the fear that causes the anger. Consider when you use words that are angry. Think for a moment to times when that anger is felt, justified. When you consider more deeply what those words of anger were, you will ultimately recognize that that anger came from a place of fear—fear of losing respect, fear of losing what you feel is important, fear of losing what you take to be good, fear of losing the impact of love over the challenge of strength, fear of losing pride, fear of losing self-respect. Anger always comes from fear, and yet the person receiving the anger seldom recognizes that what is being expressed is fear. Anger is merely the representation of fear. So when you hear words of anger, go beyond what you hear. Seeing with the heart does not stop with what is said in its pursuit of what is meant. So it is between cultures, parts of societies, nations—the principle is the same.

We ask you always to listen with the heart so that you can see with the heart. It is listening through love that allows the free expression of what is needed, and when you understand what is needed, your response to those needs can be truthfully guided through your view of God working through you and through others. In such loving response, there is no anger. There is no pride. There is no fear. There is only a reaching out, and there is only love.

The paths that lead to love are always fraught with challenges. You love another, but such love is never without its challenges. The goal is to understand and to exercise what it means ultimately to be loving. Be a good listener first, and a loving response will follow.

We listen to you. We listen not to your words, but we listen to your heart. We listen to the meaning of what you feel, and our response through that listening is only through love. That is what you can take from your understanding of God and your understanding of the presence of the many guides who are there to direct and illuminate your paths.

August 10, 2017

Be comforted by that presence, be guided in your listening, and acknowledge the love that pours forth.

Amen.