

Polly's Pondering

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:1-3

This is the season of expected hospitality. We decorate our homes, we prepare feasts, and we open our doors to friends and family. We laugh, we love, we reflect. We share memories of years past. We mourn those who are no longer with us. We watch with delight as our children's eyes fill with wonder over fresh baked pies, half eaten cookies, the imagine sounds of reindeer hooves, and packages wrapped with sparkle and glitter. The sounds of Joy and festivity are everywhere. Yet, every night as we lay ourselves down to sleep, we find ourselves craving rest, peace, and hope. We pray the Lord our soul to keep.

Having kept His promise, we wake to the morning light. To find the sounds of hatefulness manifested in violent words, collapsing buildings, and the unspoken vocabulary of fear and distrust have joined us in this new day. And I find myself asking, how long, oh Lord, will we continue to disappoint you? Even during the seasons of gratitude and wonder, we wait and watch for the Christ child to arrive. And wonder how long will You, O God, remain patient?

Peter Canisius, a Dutch Jesuit priest who was born in 1521 and died in 1597. He too saw the hurt of the world. He longed for mercy and peace too. The words of his poem written centuries ago seem so timely now:

"O God, the refuge of the poor, the strength of those who toil and the comforter of all who sorrow, we commend to your mercy the unfortunate and needy in whatever land they may be. You alone know the number and extent of their sufferings and trials. Look down, Father of mercies, at those unhappy families suffering from war and slaughter, from hunger and disease and other severe trials. Spare them, O Lord, for it is truly a time for mercy."

This is not unlike any other time when the cry for mercy was raised. We are all in need of the Lord's mercy. And I believe that God looks at us and says, you are my people – you I have given mercy through the blood of the Christ child. You have received the gift of forgiveness. You have been given a hope that is imperishable. How long must I wait on you?

So, as you practice hospitality, remember that "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have ever lasting light. We that have that hope must seek to live that hope, and prayer for that hope for others. For now, it is truly a time for mercy.