

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A, 2017
St. Joan of Arc, Marlton

Carefully Taught

In 1949 Rogers and Hammerstein wrote a Broadway musical that became an American classic: *South Pacific*.

It's got great songs: "Younger than Springtime." "This Nearly Was Mine." "I'm Gonna Wash that Man Right Outa My Hair."

There is another song that isn't so familiar and doesn't get sung ... it's probably one of the shortest songs Rogers and Hammerstein ever wrote ... and it sums up the theme of the show. It's called "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught."

*You've got to be taught to
hate and fear
You've got to be taught from
year to year
It's got to be drummed in
your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully
taught*

*You've got to be taught to be
afraid
Of people whose eyes are
oddly made
and people whose skin is a
different shade
You've got to be carefully
taught*

*You've got to be taught before
it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or
eight
To hate all the people your
relatives hate
You've got to be carefully
taught!*

I fell in love with a girl when I was five years old. Linda was the prettiest girl in the neighborhood. I asked her to marry me and she said yes. The next day she saw me and told me her parents said she couldn't marry me because she was Protestant and I was Catholic.

We learn at an early age that we are different.

With kids, of course, it's funny. But it's not so funny when any kind of bias, bigotry or prejudice grows into hatred, discrimination, racism,

apartheid, slavery, terrorism, genocide.

Then, it's not funny. It's evil.

At the time of Jesus, Israelites were taught to hate Samaritans and Canaanites, and Samaritans and Canaanites were taught to hate Israelites.

Jesus constantly challenged this by going "across the border." He would travel into foreign territory. He would go into pagan lands, enemy lands.

In the story we hear today, Jesus is again in a place where he shouldn't be. When a Canaanite woman calls to him, Jesus doesn't immediately reply. He wants to hear what the disciples have to say. And what do the disciples want him to do: ignore her, send her away. She's a nuisance. She's a dog. She's a nothing! Dismiss her!

Jesus doesn't. Jesus *never* dismisses another person.

We call ourselves Christian. This means we follow Jesus. If we are going to follow Jesus

then we must follow him into enemy territory. If we follow Jesus we must love the way he loves.

This past week we have seen incident after incident of hate in action – from Virginia to Spain and lots of places in between.

In light of this hate, and in light of our Scriptures today: we need to look deep within our own hearts and be honest with ourselves and root out any kind of prejudice and bigotry, however slight or subtle it might be. Because prejudice can sneak into our attitudes and vocabulary and behavior, sometimes without us even realizing it.

Whom do we treat or regard as less than human? Whom do we look down on? Whom do we stereotype? Whom are we afraid of and why?

Our children and our grandchildren are watching us. They will learn from us. They will learn either to hate or to love. Let's carefully, consciously, and courageously teach them to love ... like ... *Jesus!*