

During the Season of Creation, our second reading's being taken from a resource compiled by the Episcopal Church.¹ Today, we heard exquisite words from Ernesto Cardinal, who was a Nicaraguan Roman Catholic priest, a poet, and a liberation theologian. And Ernesto Cardinal was also a revolutionary.

Fr. Cardinal lived for much of his life under the long military dictatorship that followed the US occupation of Nicaragua, and he lived through the devastating impact of a truly oppressive regime.

Under the dictatorship 'the country' grew wealthy, but that wealth stayed concentrated in the hands of a few. And the farmers – whose produce, being sold around the world, created the wealth, they were displaced from their lands and forced to work for a wage. And the wages were low, so many couldn't afford the rising cost of food, and so there was terrible hunger and malnutrition and even starvation, despite the great wealth that was accumulating for those running the country.

Folks who tried to oppose the regime lived in constant danger of imprisonment, torture, or execution; terrifying, shocking violence was the norm and was used to suppress any kind of opposition.²

Generations of Nicaraguans were impacted by this collective trauma.

Ernesto Cardinal's life was shaped by being witness to all this suffering *and* by his Christian faith. He said, "My fidelity to the Gospel requires me to be a revolutionary."³

¹ see <https://newcreationliturgies.org/seasonofcreation/>

² see Ernesto Cardinal, *The Gospel of Solentiname*, (Wipf & Stock, Eugene OR: 2010), xi-xv

³ https://elpais.com/diario/1979/05/06/sociedad/294789612_850215.html

It's with good reason that the word revolutionary, or revolution, might make us nervous, because it's so often connected to violence, to armed struggle, to forced regime change and the seizing of power, but that's not where the word comes from.

Revolution comes from the Latin word meaning to turn back, to roll back, to revolve. It was originally a word about turning. It only started being used to describe political change a few hundred years ago, a turning over of the existing order, a radical transformation of the way things are.

Revolution, in this sense, means bringing about something entirely new, a new way of living and being and doing; a total re-orientation of how folks live. And a revolutionary is someone who plays a role in the complete transformation of the way things are.

Political revolutions are, tragically, usually violent, and that's certainly true of the revolution in Nicaragua – but violence isn't baked into the word revolution or into its meaning.

Revolution is an overhaul, an upheaval, revolution is what's happens when reforms just can't do enough. Systems of oppression can't be tinkered with to become more humane; changes here and there, or reforms, will never turn an inherently rotten system into one that's good. Revolution recognizes that the whole thing is the problem, the whole way of things is the problem, and so there needs to be a complete change, something entirely new is needed.

When you think about it in this way, the Gospel is inescapably revolutionary.

Jesus doesn't just call for changes here and there or reforms of this or that, Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, a reality that's entirely and absolutely different from the way things are. Because this inherently unjust, human-created way can never be tweaked or reformed into something that's just and life-giving for all.

To be a part of God's kingdom Jesus tells us we'll have to turn the other cheek,⁴ go the extra mile,⁵ if someone takes our shirt we're to hand over our coat as well.⁶

He tells us not to store up treasures for ourselves on earth⁷ – we cannot serve God and wealth⁸.

He tells us to pray for those who persecute us,⁹ to forgive, not just seven times, but seventy-seven.¹⁰ Jesus tells us to love our enemies.¹¹

Things aren't just a little bit different in God's kingdom, it's not this world but reformed, this world but made a bit better, it's a revolution, a complete turning, a revolving ... toward God

The poor are blessed, those who mourn are blessed, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, the peacemakers are blessed.¹²

The hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the unhoused are sheltered, the sick are cared for, prisoners are visited. Strangers are welcomed.¹³

⁴ Matthew 5:39

⁵ Matthew 5:41

⁶ Matthew 5:40

⁷ Matthew 6:19

⁸ Matthew 6:24

⁹ Matthew 5:44

¹⁰ Matthew 18:22

¹¹ Matthew 8:44

¹² see Matthew 5 3-12

¹³ see Matthew 25:35-36

Those who are like children will be the ones welcomed into the kingdom.¹⁴

In Jesus' time, those who stood to lose the life they loved, knew that Jesus wasn't just a man but a revolution, they thought that the violence of his crucifixion would put an end to it all before it could even get going. But they couldn't undo what God had started. The revolution had started.

Jesus' early followers, the first Kingdom revolutionaries, they were violently persecuted and martyred for trying to turn the known world upside down proclaiming God's love in Christ,¹⁵ but that didn't stop what God had started.

Jesus is a revolution – not towards violence or vengeance, not towards a seizing of power, but a revolution, a turning, towards justice, mercy, reconciliation, healing, love. A revolution that changes what we think power is for, that changes the way we live with one another and with all Creation, that brings an end to violences of all kinds.

And that's the revolution this world desperately needs. Because we are not taking care of each other or this earth we share. We were to be stewards of this Creation that God called into life through love, but we're still not loving our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁶

And the climate and ecological crisis we're living through, that our attention is drawn to each year during this Season of Creation, the climate crisis is a stark reminder of that.

¹⁴ Matthew 18:4

¹⁵ Acts 17:6

¹⁶ Matthew 22:39

In the last 50 years, human actions have wiped out 60% of this planet's mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish.¹⁷

More than a million species are headed for extinction because of us.¹⁸

Oceans are warming, and filling with plastic, and marine life is being devastated.¹⁹ Ecosystems are collapsing.²⁰ Record-breaking weather patterns are becoming more frequent, and deadly droughts, floods, storms, and heat are making climate refugees of the absolute poorest, those who have the least, but must still share this planet with us.²¹

And yet, we do not despair. We look to Jesus. We look to that true revolution.

As followers of Jesus, we can see this world can't continue on as it is, changes here and there, reforms of this and that, won't be enough – but in Christ we can see the world as it can be, and as Christians we can live as though that new world is already here. God has started the revolution in and through Jesus, and it's through us that this radically new way, utterly transformed new world, does begin to appear.

So let's go big: let's refuse to accept that the way things are is inevitable, let's truly imagine all the ways things really can be different, and live it. Let's actually envision/take seriously God's new reality so we can collectively call it into being by our lives, let's challenge what's considered 'normal,' be intentional about disrupting our habits of thought and choice and action, let's be willing to sacrifice.

¹⁷ see page 8 of this resource: <https://newcreationliturgies.org/seasonofcreation/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ <https://www.weforum.org/stories/forum-institutional/climate-crisis-poor-davos2023/>

Let's deeply sense the urgency, waiting is like refusing to hear God's call on our lives. And let's be brave, because we'll have to take risks, none of us can know exactly what lay ahead.

As our collect today says, let's commit to active hope, and practice and pray, always pray, through Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of Creation, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.