

31. Juli: Bartolomé de Las Casas

Rubén Marcelo Huenulef Ortega

Zum Tag

Bartolomé de las Casas (geboren 1484/1485 in Sevilla, gestorben 1566 bei Madrid) wanderte 1502 in die sogenannte „Neue Welt“ aus und ließ sich auf der Insel Hispaniola (heute Staatsgebiet der Dominikanischen Republik und der Republik Haiti) nieder. Als Dominikanermönch, Missionar und für kurze Zeit Bischof von Chiapas (Südostmexiko) setzte er sich erfolgreich gegen Sklavenhandel und für die Rechte der indigenen Bevölkerung in den durch die spanische Konquista unterworfenen mittel- und südamerikanischen Ländern ein. Da der genaue Todestag nicht bekannt ist, variiert das Datum seines Gedenktages zwischen dem 17. Juli (ELCA), dem 20. Juli (Anglikanische Kirche) und dem 31. Juli (EKD).

Bibeltext und Auslegung

And the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms. (Jeremiah 1.9b-10a)

Bartolome de Las Casas was a formidable voice of God, a prophetic voice in a time of greed, abuse and violence. He was a historian and a priest and devoted most of his life to the evangelization of the Americas (by then known as the Occidental Indias). His writings in defense of the enslaved American indigenous peoples, changed the way Spaniards related to the peoples of the Americas and also changed the way we look at other human beings. Las Casas wrote many books but all of them have a great topic: human beings are not entailed to abuse other human beings, and in the case of the Christian people, they were supposed to behave as Christ and share God's love and gospel with them. But Bartolome did not come to this idea just for an accident. His life was marked by several experiences that changed his life and view of others. As young as 20 years old, being a soldier and the son of a rich entrepreneur, he was given an „indio“, an indigenous person and there it began this encounter with the other, with the unknown one that years later would give many fruits. Later, while he was in his thirties, he received an „encomienda“ and participated in several war campaigns in America against the indigenous people. Soon he clearly saw the atrocities committed by the Spaniards against the natives and decided to devote his life to the defense of those being oppressed by the greed and brutality of the conquistadors. Later on he will sustain important discussions in Europe with theologians and court officials about the true nature of indigenous people and how they must be treated. Some of his ideas found echoes in the authorities and some not, some became laws and some not, but his influence was changing little by little the infamous world he had known at first.

Bartolome was like anyone of us, ignorant of what really happens around us, we sometimes only take what pleasure and life give us, without thinking in the lives behind those pleasures we enjoy. However, sometimes, God's grace brings us to meet people that changes our lives forever because they show us another way to live, think and feel. At those encounters, we are given eyes to see and when we really see what happens around us, then we are able to speak up, as Bartolome did. Perhaps, our situation will not take us to nations and kings as in his case, however, in the place where we are, we can speak up for justice, for human rights, we can do something to give back to people the most cherished characteristic of all: their humanity. Bartolome did so and changed his world. Let it be so with us, that joining the force of humanity, we include in our reality all those human beings who are discriminated against because of nationality, religion, gender or sexual orientation. No matter where or what we are, we are all God's children.

Gebet

Lord of all peoples, we thank you for the voices of justice and dignity that sound around the globe, and for all the peoples that see in another human being the image of your love. Bring us all in the unity of peace and love and may some day, all the world be one in you. Amen.