

Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sisters, all of the readings for the last three weeks have spoken to us about the present Crises in the Church. We must always remember, that the gospels are not static, dead pieces of paper; but rather, the Living Word of God today and always!

We have heard many people in the press and in the Church trying to explain what has happened by saying it is the result of “Clericalism”; certainly, there is Clericalism in the Church; but the reality is that what has happened is the result of moral relativism and moral failure, which has gone un-accounted for and un-repented. There can be no conversion in our lives without the realization that we are sinners. All of us are called to a deep repentance and change of mind and heart and behavior, and a radical return of heart, mind and soul to God in radical dependency upon Him, throughout our lives. All of us, Pope, Bishop Priest, Deacon and lay-person are called to this on-going, life-long conversion! In today’s Gospel, the Lord Jesus invites His apostles and us, to revisit what we consider to be greatness!

The first reading speaks to us of the resentment of the wicked, when they are faced with someone who follows the path of wisdom, the call to holiness, and those who try to live it; whereas those who are on the path to wickedness refuse the call to repentance and continue in their evil. Those who refuse the path to repentance and holiness often try to relativize their evil choices by compartmentalizing their lives, by telling themselves, “well, this is just natural. This is just the way I am. It’s not so bad. It just part of my genetic makeup!” In today’s moral relativism, our society, and even many within the Church talk about respecting other’s outlooks and lifestyles; but that doesn’t mean not telling someone that they are about to step on a rattlesnake or walk off a cliff! Often, those who have hardened their hearts express anger, resentment and an arrogance that we see in that first reading which expresses itself by demanding their rights, while denying others the right to speak the truth—it is happening in a number of our states and Europe and even in our own government, and sometimes, in the Church!

In the second reading, St. James reminds us that our jealousies and selfish ambitions only lead to discord and strife. He teaches us that it is our inner conflicts with our better angels, our natural sense of right and wrong, that lead us into outer conflict. Wars that break-out, rarely remain contained within the area where they broke out; whether it is within a family, congregation, church or a society! Loving the way of this world, always leads to the exclusion of others and to personal and communal selfishness; loving and acting on the Way of God, always brings us true freedom and brings us into loving others! Jesus wants to set us free; that is why He makes demands upon our lives!

This is the teaching of Jesus for us today in the Gospel. Jesus describes to us the path of greatness, as one of humble service willing to lay down one's life for the benefit of others. Ambition seeks to serve only to achieve one's own ambitions. When Jesus gives us the example of serving a child, He reminds us that the goal to serve should be like our of love and concern for a tiny child. A tiny child has no way to further our ambitions. Jesus reminds us that when we serve out of this simple humility, we truly serve our Heavenly Father. No matter how obscure we may be, how unimportant we may be, all of us can serve, even if it is only to earnestly pray and make prayer shawls for shut-ins and the sick. How grateful I am for my beloved parents! I remember with such great joy, coming home on a cold day, to hot bread, fresh butter, and homemade jam. What a small thing, but so great a love!