



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE
DIOCESE OF HOUMA-THIBODAUX

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 6th 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Global Solidarity

“[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”USCCB.

Jesus tells us to love our neighbor, even though they may be different from us. That means those neighbors who live next door and those who live on the other side of the planet. Jesus reminds us that we are all part of God’s great family.

The readings for this Sunday speak of the wonderful, positive power of faith amid all kinds of problems and challenges.

- Habakkuk writes: “...the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint.”
- Paul speaks of a “rich trust that dwells within us.”
- Jesus says that if you have faith “the size of a mustard seed,” you can move a mountain.

The violence, of which Habakkuk speaks, has been made real in our generation in wars and acts of terrorism, and in all sorts of disputes.

Violence is not new. It appears again and again throughout human history. The scriptures today remind us that God has an alternate vision of how life is to be lived. The “mountain” can be moved. There is alternative to violence and discord. We can only address this violence if we know ourselves and our limits. Without self-knowledge, we are destined to repeat the mistakes that cause violence. We are “servants.” We need that increase in faith that can only come from God. We are not in charge of everything. We don’t have to use force. We don’t have to be more than we are. With this sort of realism and humility, we will have the wisdom to talk to one another, to avoid violence, and bless the world with Christ’s gift of peace and justice.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 13th 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Call to Family, Community, and Participation

As human beings, we have a right to live and grow in peace. Because we have that right, we have the responsibility to make sure others enjoy the same opportunity too. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.



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God desires good things for all people. God's desire for good is not limited to any one group of people. Naaman is a foreigner, but he is still healed. Jesus heals all 10 people with leprosy including the Samaritan. God's love is inclusive. As followers of such a God, we too want to be inclusive. Such a perspective will affect how we relate to people from other parts of the world or other religious traditions or other racial and ethnic groups. Such a perspective will influence how we act on immigration issues or the welcoming of refugees. Such a way of thinking and seeing will influence how nations relate to each other or how they use the resources of our planet. Genuine gratitude is a transforming experience that opens us up to others. It changes our whole way of looking at things and our way of behaving. Naaman, the foreigner, is overwhelmed with gratitude and has a religious conversion after his healing. After his healing, the Samaritan runs back with enthusiasm to thank Jesus and to be a part of the community of people around Jesus. Genuine gratitude changes us. We see everything differently. It is an invitation to be open to all sorts of things – concern for the poor, concern for those who are different, desire for growth and change, commitment to community and the common good. Gratitude is an invitation into fearlessness. It is an invitation into new life and joy – a new life and joy that change our world and us and help us form real community. Gratitude energizes us to live out the social teaching of our church and to share our gifts with the world.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 20th 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Global Solidarity

We are all part of one human family—whatever our national, racial, religious, economic or ideological differences. In an increasingly interconnected world, loving our neighbors has global dimensions.

At the end of today's gospel, Jesus wonders whether the Son of Man will find faith at the end of time. To put it in other words:

- + Will people remain faithful to the spirit of God, the spirit of Jesus?
- + Will human beings allow themselves to be transformed by the radical vision of Jesus?
- + Will peace and justice prevail?
- + Will our society care for those in need, like the widow?

Jesus proclaimed a radical message about God's love for all of us. Jesus offered a radical invitation to love one another without condition – to love those who are different than themselves, to love even our enemies. In a world with many examples of hatred, violence, war, and unnecessary death, Jesus appears with the radical call for us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to trust in the way of peace, and to be especially concerned for those most in need. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the response to Amalek's attack on Israel was to wage war trusting in the power of God to bring victory. Can our faith today help us to work together as a community for the good of the world? In the second reading we are told to "remain faithful to what we have learned and



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believed.” We are to “be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient, convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.” As we work for justice, do we have the persistence and vision of the widow in the gospel story?

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 27th 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world. He reminds us of our Christian duty to give a voice to those who go unheard and to help those who are most vulnerable. The first reading from Sirach reminds us of God’s concern for the poor and for the oppressed. God cares for all people. God does not want to forget those who are powerless or voiceless. The gospel today reminds us not to try to exult ourselves or focus too much on our own importance. It seems that Jesus is saying that we instead should forget all that and acknowledge our limits. God seems to be more pleased with the one who does not try to be the first or most important. He wants us to be free to live as Christians so we can focus on what is really important.

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 3rd 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.

Today’s reading from the Book of Wisdom reminds us that God’s “imperishable spirit is in all things.” Catholic Social Teaching affirms the dignity of every human person. In the gospel today, Jesus affirms the worth and goodness of God in a concrete human person, Zacchaeus of Jericho. As a tax collector for the Roman oppressors, Zacchaeus makes lots of money but understandably seems to be respected or honored by no one in the town. Jesus does not ignore this man whom so many people dislike. Jesus does not start out by condemning his behavior. Jesus simply begins treating him as a human being – by acknowledging his existence and coming to his house for dinner. The next thing you know, Zacchaeus is changed. He returns money to those who have been cheated. He gives to the poor. Salvation comes to him and his household. Salvation is now just a feeling. It involves a change in behavior and in how we relate to the world. This is what happened to Zacchaeus. His behavior is changed. His way of dealing with people is transformed.



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Social transformation begins. Spirituality is not simply an interior thing. Spirituality involves our behavior and not just our personal behavior, but also our behavior as a society, as a community. Good spirituality leads to social transformations.

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 10, 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Global Solidarity

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers...We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

The readings today challenge us to ask a question. What is really important? Is it the legalism that we observe in the question posed by the Sadducees? Is it the unwavering religious faith in the midst of persecution that we see in the mother and seven sons in the first reading? Is it faith in the resurrection from the dead and an afterlife? Is it what Paul calls grace, which will "encourage the heart and strengthen them in every good deed and word?" Is it found in what we say we believe? Is it found in how we act? In the gospel today, Jesus seems to be saying that it is to be found in more than just the afterlife – in some other world that is still to come. Jesus seems to say that what is important is to be found in the here and now as well as in the past and the future. In Luke 20:38, in his affirmation of life, Jesus challenges us to promote life today. He calls us to do this in our efforts to end war and violence, in our work to ensure that the poor and the rich all have an equal chance to live a healthy and complete life, in our practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, in our special concern for the poor and vulnerable, in our concern for refugees and the homeless, in our speaking up for justice for everyone, in all of our involvements in the important justice issues of our day, in our challenge to those whose actions threaten life, and in our work to change the structures of society that cause death.

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 17, 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Difficulty, opposition, confusion, mess, uncertainty and ambiguity are all part of life. Good religion does not guarantee that this will not sometimes be the case. Good religion does not remove all of



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the mess of life. However, today God says through Malachi, "...for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healings rays." Jesus says, "by your perseverance you will secure your lives."

In the challenges of our life, we can find God and God will lead us to what is right and just. In the challenges of society, we can find God and God will lead us to what is right and just. We are invited to work for justice, even when it challenges the value system of our world or culture. We are invited to overcome evil by love, war by peace, and selfishness by selfless giving.

While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here—the days will come there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." So many things that human beings consider important are not really the most important. Even the adornments of the temple will not last. The gospel invites us to focus on what is really most important. We affirm the dignity of every human person. We affirm our desire to live in solidarity as brothers and sisters. We affirm our commitment to peace, justice, and nonviolence. We affirm our efforts to live in a way that makes sure that everyone shares in the bounty of God's gifts. We affirm our desire to respect the gifts and resources of our planet and not abuse and overuse them. We affirm our commitment to the values of Jesus Christ.

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 24, 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society... We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person

In the gospel, many people (and especially the leaders) sneer at Jesus – a king on the cross – a human person with no apparent power – a failure. Their concept of "kingship" is that of power over others or domination and control. However, the "kingship" of Jesus centers on relationship and community – service and solidarity – sacrifice and love. In the gospel dialogue, we are reminded that true "kingship" or true authority is reflected in mercy. Jesus, in the midst of the pain of injustice and violence and criticism, in his time of suffering and death, proclaims mercy to the criminal.

In the second reading, Paul speaks of a peace that comes through the "blood of the cross." In this time of war and terrorism, it is important for us to hear the call of God to a peace that comes through the Way of Jesus crucified – a peace that comes from a God who shares our struggles and our suffering.



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The first reading gives voice to the people's desire for a king – for leadership. Do they know what they are asking for? In the years that follow Israel will experience the good and the not so good in kingly leadership. In the process, Israel will be called again and again to be faithful to values that transcend any trust in earthly political or military power. All the scriptures today invite us to find our power and strength in God – a God who rules over everything in a new way – a way of compassion and mercy – a way of empowerment and liberation – a way of solidarity and love.

First Sunday in Advent

December 1st 2019

Catholic Social Teaching: Global Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace.

The advent message today is very simple. "Be watchful and alert."

God and the goodness of God are available.

The call to work together for justice and the common good is all around us.

All we have to do is be alert and watch and not miss it.

Unfortunately, sometimes our world is not watchful or alert and we miss God and the goodness of God. Sometimes we miss the call of God to get into action. Sometimes we don't connect with God in the poverty and struggles of the people of the world. As individuals or as a society, we wander away from God and God's values. The question is: "why?"

Today might be a good time to reflect on those things in our society and culture that keeps us from being alert and alive to God and God's values. There seem to be so many pressures and values which indoctrinate us and keep us from being what God wants us to be. So many ways of thinking and seeing are in tension with the values of Catholic Social Teaching. We need to be aware of them so that we can be truly free and alert. If we are alert we begin to see the needs of our world and its people. We notice injustice and economic inequality. We become sensitive to discrimination and racism. Those who are worried about the poor are hoping for policies that help those who are most in need. As Christians we know that no political system or leadership will be perfect. We know that we always need as Jesus says today to be "watchful and alert." We are called to open our eyes to the needs of all our brothers and sisters.

---Education for Justice Lectionary Reflections By: Fr. John Bucki, S.J. & CRS & USCCB.



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