

A Letter from Our Pastoral Coordinator November 04, 2018

May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

This week we concluded reading from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I focused in my daily Wednesday homily on one line (Eph. 6:9) from this great letter. It reads: "Masters, act in the same way towards them, and stop bullying, knowing that both they and you have a Master in heaven and that with him there is no partiality."

I found this line to be quite powerful for me personally. In ancient Roman culture, scholars estimate that about one third of the population were slaves. It may be hard for us to imagine but there was no Magna Carta, no international law, no Geneva accords, and no human rights organizations. Slaves were considered objects and without rights. If anything was guaranteed, it was that slaves were "objects" and pieces of property, and the masters of the slaves had rights over the slaves.

St. Paul neither endorsed nor rejected the institution of slavery. He was a man of his times and yet compared to others, he was progressive in that he held onto and promoted something much deeper and fundamental to Christian anthropology. Regardless of one's state in life, St. Paul reveals in this line how much he believed in the fundamental dignity and worth of every human being regardless of her/his state in life. For Paul, and more importantly for God, there is no partiality between a master and a slave – each has dignity before God.

This has huge implications for the moral teaching of the Church as we live in the world. Whether the issue is human trafficking, the rights of the unborn and the aged, those incarcerated, the plight of those who migrant and flee from tyranny and lack of opportunity, of the rights of our Jewish brothers and sisters to freely assemble and worship, the beginning of the conversation

about these and other important issues hinge on the God-given rights of all human beings.

A fundamental question for me in my own prayer is, "how do I deal with those who are not like me and don't share my values, my perspective, my politics, and my religion?" We live in a diverse world, and we must stand for human life in all cases. In the protection of life, we must respond to those who are different from us with compassion, love, mercy, and justice. That was certainly the mark of early Christianity. That characteristic and practice drew non-believers to the truth of Christ. Not only did early Christians take care of their own, they took care of strangers, aliens, and pagans and even responded in love to those who harmed them.

Ultimately, I believe, the mass invites into the sacrificial love of God revealed in Jesus and his embrace of the cross. We commune with God in His Word, in the Body and Blood of Christ, and in the community that gathers together. As we end mass, the last dialogue is the Dismissal when the deacon or priest says, "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." That is a charge from Christ to transform the world, to show "no partiality," and enkindle in others the love we have just received no matter how much our fellow human beings may differ from us. It is by the way we live our lives, and interact with others especially those with whom we differ, we give glory to God.

In God's great love, hope and mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deacon Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deacon Jim Fish, Pastoral Coordinator
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