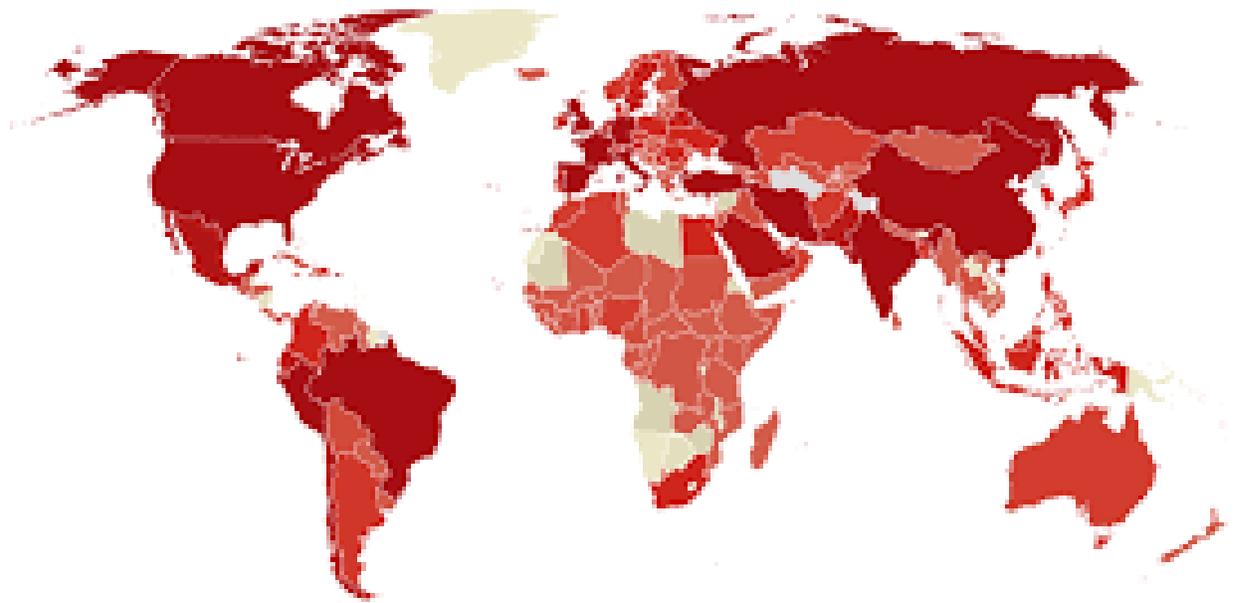


The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

34th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

EZ 34:11-12, 15-17, PS 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6, 1 COR 15:20-26, 28, MT 25:31-46



Dcn Frank Sila
11/22/2020

In the Book of Genesis we are reminded that, *'God created the heavens and the earth. God created man in his image and likeness. Male and female he created them. And, it was good.'* Long before our sacred texts were written and long before organized religion, God imbued His Sacred Spirit into his creation. The visible universe and natural world evoked awe and grandeur pointing to something beyond. In fact, Creation is often referred to as the first testament. Imagine the shepherd alone in the field. As the embers of his fire give way to night, the stars open above. What he sees stirs his heart with wonder. That wonder is something of a divine nudge, a sacred moment that says. "I am here."

Richard Rohr writes, "Your core, your deepest DNA, is divine; it is the Spirit of Love implanted within you by your Creator at the first moment of your creation." Just as the sheep know the sound of the Shepherd's voice, we recognize the Sacred Spirit of our Creator.

Ron Rolheiser, puts it this way; "Inside each of us, beyond what we can name, we have a dark memory of having once been touched and caressed by hands far gentler than our own. That caress left a permanent mark, the imprint of a love so tender and good that its memory becomes a prism through which we see everything else. This brand lies beyond conscious memory and forms the center of our heart and soul..."

In a healthy relationship, the parties must take the time to communicate. Though few of us lay out under the stars tending sheep, we can, as Jesus suggests, go to the inner room. There we look for the hands and Spirit far gentler than our own. Virtually meeting with friends recently, the topic of prayer came up. One of the women in the group spoke of contemplative prayer and her recent experience. She had started her prayer by reading and rereading a passage from Matthew.

*Look at the birds in the sky;
they do not sow or reap,
they gather nothing into barns,
yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are not you more important than they?" Matthew 6*

The norm for contemplative prayer would be to sit quietly with this passage. My friend chose to walk through the woods using the natural world as a touch stone. The birds held her attention. In retelling, she moved her arms up and down imitating the many birds flapping their wings as they bounced from one place to the other. Then she saw in the sky a large bird floating effortlessly on the thermals. Today, many know or at least suspect that their DNA is divine. They bounce about looking for confirmation in a new love, belief or New Age practice. Unfortunately, some believe that the Creator's love, their worth, must be earned and merited by deeds. *There is nothing that we can do, no creed that we can profess, that will merit anything beyond the gift of God's unconditional love.* To continue the analogy, we learn to recognize the voice of our shepherd by going to the inner room. With practice, the moments of grace found there become the thermals beneath our wings that hold us aloft. That voice becomes clearer with each passing year. The inner room is where we learn, not only to soar, but to soar with joy.

God's unbounded and inexhaustible love for each of us can also be problematic. How do we imagine a love so large that it encompasses those that believe differently than we do? Other communities profess far different beliefs, and yet they have genuinely experienced the touch of God's grace. We compound the problem when we *falsely assert* that God loves us based on the creed we profess. This is a barrier to dialogue and our understanding of the Cosmic Christ. His is the voice from the inner room that calls *all* into relationship with the Creator.

Are we then all members of the Body of Christ? In today's Gospel, we hear,

'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you drink?
When did we see you a stranger and welcome you,
or naked and clothe you?
When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'
And the king will say to them in reply,
**'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did
for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.'** *Matthew 25*

Jesus affirms that all of humanity shares a divine DNA with him and each other. This is the basis for our teaching on social justice. This is the basis for the respect and dignity due each man, woman and child.

Knowing the connection we have with Christ and the rest of humanity should guide our prayer. Jesus reminded us that, "Where two or more gather in my name, I will be present." Praying **TO** someone can be a limitation as it denotes a distance and separation. I have of recent begun prayer, "Lord, pray **WITH ME...**" There is a beautiful and humble intimacy in those words. When I enter into the heart of Christ I must begin to love all those that he loves however feeble my attempt.

Without the ability to receive Eucharist we can lose our bearing. We try to muddle through the darkness of a pandemic. In a moment of grace, Jesus enters our quarantined lives. He enters our locked rooms, and whispers, "Peace be with you. Touch me. Know me. Feel my embrace in all the moments of your life. I am here with you for all time." "Be still and know that I am God." *Psalms 46:10*

References

All scripture quotations are taken from. *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB, 1987.

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Rolheiser, R. (2011). *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*. New York: Doubleday Religion.

Rohr, R. (2016, March 8). *The Positive in the Negative*. Retrieved from Center For Action and Contemplation: <https://cac.org/the-positive-in-the-negative-2016-02-15/>

Note: Because of the tightening pandemic, this homily was posted and not delivered in person.