December 8, 2019: Second Sunday of Advent

As I am writing this, it is still snowing, though not heavily at this moment, but we have already been told that more, and heavier stuff, is coming. As a pastor I am always a little conflicted about snowstorms. Snow comes with a cost to the parish. The parking lots need to be plowed and the stairways and walkways must be shoveled. If the snow falls on a weekend we usually see reduced collections, and that money does not always get recouped. More importantly, of course, is that there are fewer people at Mass. Then, if the storm is bad enough, we become concerned about how we will get to the hospital or nursing home if an emergency arises and we have not been plowed out.

The conflict that arises for me is that I simply like snow. I have always liked snow, but even more so when I began to ski. The response people usually give me is that it is okay if it snows in the mountains, but just not here. However, the reality is that we need snow to prevent drought and other issues. Snow is actually necessary for us, even though it is also a big inconvenience at times.

It is so easy to be conflicted about things, particularly where our faith is concerned. We live in a world, a society, and a nation that has very different views than that of the Church. We live in a world that believes in situational ethics and relative truth. We live in a world that believes we can pick and choose whatever we want, according to what we determine to be right or wrong. The only criteria is that it does not hurt another person. We cannot criticize the choice of another because that means we are judging them; we are imposing our worldview upon the other, and that is the only thing that is not acceptable. If you tell someone they are wrong, then you are judging their worldview and saying yours is superior. You are belittling their way of living, acting, or embracing themselves.

It is now about each person embracing their own individual identity and sense of self. The only real evil and harm is preventing the individual from fully expressing their unique view of the world. And anything, as defined by me, that does not embrace their inclusive way of celebrating this uniqueness is harmful and damaging. Where there is no perceived harm, there is no foul. We simply need to live and let live. There is where harmony will be found.

The truth, of course, is very different. Our faith teaches us that truth comes from one place. Our true identity comes from one place. Our true sense of peace and happiness comes from one place, and it is not in following my path. It is found in seeking and understanding the path of the Lord. The world is only concerned about ‘the here and now’; Christianity is concerned about the long view—eternity.

The ultimate question we need to ask is, what is more important to me? Is my life more about the here and now and fitting into the worldview of life? Do I care more about what my neighbor thinks than about what God thinks? Do I believe what the world believes is true and right, and reject what the Church teaches because it is outdated?

One thing we should not feel conflicted about is the truth that Christ is coming into the world again. The simple truth is that we all will come face to face with the Lord at the end of our time. And, in that moment, Christ will not be concerned with what the world believed. Jesus will not be concerned if you upheld the way the world looked at the big questions. He will want to know if you were faithful to his teachings. Were you willing to take up your cross and follow Him? Were you willing to pay the cost of discipleship? And He told us the cost of discipleship: “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather, division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Christ divides for the simple reason that there is only one truth. There is only one right way. There is only one way to truly embrace life and that is by following Jesus, for He told us, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” We must prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming by simply being faithful to Him. But it comes with conflict. It comes with cost.
Are you ready to pay the price of true discipleship?

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian