

## **Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time / Year A / June 21, 2020 (Fr. Giese)**

We human beings are very good at many things. We are builders and have erected amazing structures, even in ancient times without the aid of modern equipment. We are artistic and throughout human history human beings have beautified their dwellings, their buildings, their common structures with images that have no practical purpose but which edify and inspire. We human beings are creative. I think it would be safe to say that every generation of human beings has made advancements in technology, farming, the use of metals, and just about every other field of endeavor that enhances human life. We are musical and create instruments and compositions across an amazing spectrum of styles. And we human beings are imaginative. We can speculate on things we have never seen; we can create stories about people and situations we have never experienced, and we can visualize the future and takes steps to make it a reality.

Yes. We human beings are very good at these things and so much more. What we human beings are not very good at is assigning the right value to other people. We can look at other human beings and devalue them, make them in our own minds, less than ourselves and for virtually any reason at all; education, location, appearance, weight, religion, ethnicity, clothing, speech, employment, political opinion, school, age and on and on. And we human beings don't have to be very high on the ladder to engage in devaluing others to put ourselves at least one rung above them. I've seen it. I've witnessed it first hand; instances where people who have almost nothing could not resist the temptation to devalue others through words and actions.

And whenever we devalue others it is hurtful and destructive. The result of the hurt and destruction can range from humiliation and anger, to division and violence, and even to death and it has an effect not only on the people who devalue others and those who are devalued but on the whole human race. This constant temptation to devalue others holds us back at every level.

That is why we need God. Specifically, we need Jesus Christ. If Jesus teaches me that my Heavenly Father knows when even a sparrow falls from the sky it is known by God and that I am worth more than many sparrows, it is to encourage me, yes, but to let me know that everyone else is worth that too. If Jesus teaches me that my Heavenly Father knows me so well that he

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knows the number of hairs on my head, that is an encouraging thought, yes, but I am not the exception. God knows that about each of his children.

If you go throughout the gospels you will consistently see Jesus affirming the worth of people, the God-given worth of people; a Roman centurion, a member of the occupying force, still worthy of Jesus healing his servant, a woman caught in adultery, still worth saving, a hated tax-collector, still worth an afternoon in his house, a Samaritan woman ostracized by her community because of her many relationships, still worthy of taking the time to teach about the nature of grace, a man with a useless arm, still worthy of healing, even on the sabbath.

You see, Jesus never lost sight of the God-given value of each human being. But we human beings can, and do lose sight of the value of others. We can even be conscious of the wrongness of it and still do it. Someone sent a link to me of video with an interview of Dr. Carhartt who operates the clinic up the street. It was chilling to hear him speak openly of what he does to other human beings. But so are other images that easily come to mind of human beings treating other human beings as having no value, as being lesser creatures, not made by God. You see, we human beings find it difficult to value ourselves appropriately without at the same time valuing other less, making them less so that we are more.

Jesus never saw anyone that way, not even from the cross. Even those crucifying him were worth his suffering and death. And that is an essential part of being Christian. If I believe that Jesus died for me, even with my sins, because Jesus believed in my worth, I must believe Jesus died for every other human being too. My worth, is that Jesus Christ, died for me. That is true for every one of us, isn't it? Our value does not come from other people. It comes from God. And the value of other people does not come from us or anyone else. It comes from God. That is why we need God. We all do. We cannot be trusted to give the right value to one another or even to ourselves. That is why the world needs us, to reveal the worth each human being has, to God. That is where peace begins.