



Homily for 11/4/2018

31st Sunday Ordinary Time, Year B

Rev. J. David Carter, JCL

Love God and Love your Neighbor

This Sunday I preached a homily from my heart and not from a prepared text. However, because it caused so much discussion I would like to share a review of the salient points of the homily:

- There are 10 commandments; but there are two sections: three that have to do with our Love of God and seven that have to do with our Love of Neighbor.
- Jesus sums up these two main sections with the Commandments: Love God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.
- To love God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength means at least attending to God on a daily basis.
 - The Analogy of a motor vehicle that gets driven only once a year applies in that the battery may be dead or the oil levels low or the fuel contaminated or empty when left unattended. If we truly love driving the motor vehicle we would at least start it once a week to make sure the battery does not go dead, check the oil level and replace it periodically and ensure that the fuel tank is full and uncontaminated.
 - The same applies for the life of faith – if we leave our faith parked under a shed and never drive it, it may not start when we most need it!
 - This is encapsulated in the first three commandments (having God as the only God, not using His name in vain, and keeping holy the Sabbath); they are the prerequisites for the Love of God that Jesus commands.
- To Love one's neighbor as oneself means, as a start, not hating one's neighbor.
- The old adage is that we don't have to like everyone but we are obliged to will his or her good!
- Sometimes we don't get to choose our neighbor; a prime example is the reality of illegal immigration. People may be here because they broke the law out of desperation. But that does not give us a right to deny them their dignity as human beings or harass or oppress them as individuals or as a whole.
- The Catholic Church speaks clearly and in a very balanced way about matters of immigration as spelled out by the Bishops of the United States:
 - Five principles emerge from Church teachings, which guide the Church's view on migration issues.
 - **I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.**
 - 34. All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.
 - **II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.**
 - 35. The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. [15](#) When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.
 - **III. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.**
 - 36. The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.
 - **IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.**
 - 37. Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.



- **V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.**
- 38. Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.
- 39. The Church recognizes the right of a sovereign state to control its borders in furtherance of the common good. It also recognizes the right of human persons to migrate so that they can realize their God-given rights. These teachings complement each other. While the sovereign state may impose reasonable limits on immigration, the common good is not served when the basic human rights of the individual are violated.
- The reality is that 50% of our parish is made up of Spanish-Speaking migrants from Guatemala. 600 come faithfully every Sunday. They clean the Church every Sunday. They come to events that are offered with food prepared ahead of time and stay after to clean up, even scrubbing the toilets. They take care of one another and are a great example of what it means to be a healthy community and as a community they exemplify the love of neighbor.
- Now I mention them in particular today because of the events going on this weekend. This evening (Sunday) The President of the United States is coming to Chattanooga. We have canceled the 1:30 Mass because of traffic fears. But if we are honest, there are other, deeper fears at play among our illegal migrant neighbors.
- On Friday night we made the decision to cancel the 1:30 Mass and arranged for a Mass to be held Saturday night (8:30pm) at one of the community's "houses of prayer" in a warehouse on Rossville, Blvd. In 24 hours they made all the plans and preparations. 600 people showed up at 8:30 at night. The bay doors of the warehouse were lifted open and the crowd flowed out into the lot with chairs lined up outside. It was only about 50° outside and they came bundled up. They stayed through the whole Mass, which went on longer than an hour. Afterwards, they had prepared a meal for everyone that came and there was plenty to go around.
- Now I was thoroughly impressed by this dedication. And I say this by way of inspiration for all of us who speak English as our first language. Perhaps I am a little pessimistic and for that I'm sorry, but I don't think that the English-speaking community could have pulled off the same. There would have been complaints about the time, "It's too late" or the temperature, "It's too cold" or the crowd, "there's not enough room" and probably questions about who would pay for the food and whether there are enough volunteers to cook it or if we should just get it catered. Again, I don't say that as an insult but rather as an examination of conscience for our community. There are of course people who are very dedicated and do so much, but it is usually like pulling teeth to get people to commit to things in our English-speaking community - just ask any of our ministry leaders. How are we doing on the 'Love the neighbor' part of Jesus' commandment?
- Now we are involved in developing our strategic plan for the next 5 years. The question was asked, "What do we want the parish to look like in 5 years?" During one session one person voiced quite prophetically, "would that our English-speaking community have the same level of participation, engagement and commitment to the parish as our Spanish-speaking community." What a beautiful vision. A parish fully engaged and committed. But isn't that just the Gospel?
- Love God with your whole heart mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. These are the law and the prophets.