

21st Ordinary Sunday
August 25, 2019
“Inherent Value”

Is 66:18-21
Heb 12:5...13
Lk 13:22-30

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Every human being has an inherent value. The Declaration of Independence acknowledged this long ago. Every human being is created by God and endowed with certain inalienable rights – which are “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”.

Sadly, many leaders and many groups throughout the world today do not accept this self-evident principle. They believe that human value and human rights are subservient to whatever they want and personally believe. Thus, they use their wealth and power to serve themselves. We see this played out, today, in Venezuela, in China, and in the many other countries from which millions have had to flee.

However, we also see it in the political interaction of our own country today. Here, many of our leaders demean, lie, withhold or disregard facts, tell half-truths, and misrepresent the whole situation. This happens on both sides of the political aisle! And the proof of this devaluing of the human person is the anger, the vitriol, and the unthinking emotion by which they attempt to manipulate others!

However, God created each of us with a marvelous, intrinsic value. We were all made in His image and in His likeness in some unfathomable way. Moreover, He destined each of us for eternal life, love, and bliss with Himself. And, every time we fail to value others, we devalue ourselves into something less than the image of Himself that God intended us to be!

The Chosen People had this same problem again and again over succeeding generations. Because of their special election by God, and the revelation of God’s prophets, they falsely concluded that God excluded everyone else!

Today, Isaiah tells the misguided group in power that, someday, they will see that God values everyone. There is no race, no nation, no color, no place of origin that excludes anyone from the Kingdom to come! Everyone will be given a chance; everyone is invited. What each does with that invitation will determine their ultimate destiny.

In the Gospel selection, one of the disciples asks Jesus if everyone will be saved. Yet, Jesus doesn't answer this question directly. He says to strive to enter through the narrow gate. This will require hard work and self-discipline. Unfortunately, most will not do what it takes to enter through that narrow passage. Instead, they will think they can enter in a much easier way – through a much wider and expansive gate.

They will think that although they believed in God, knew about Jesus, and followed some of the Gospel demands – they will be admitted. But they will be wrong – They did not really know Jesus at all. They did not have a relationship with him. They did not know him in a deeply personal way. They did not really know Jesus, his mind, or his heart! Consequently, they failed in their response to what the Holy Spirit prompted them to do or not to do! Furthermore, if they excluded anyone themselves, by devaluing them in their own mind – that, in itself, would disqualify them from the Kingdom of Heaven!

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us of the discipline that is necessary to enter through that narrow door. It is the discipline of God which enables us to become more like Jesus himself. Jesus experienced our life, our hardships, our emotional and physical pain – and, ultimately, he suffered and died on the cross.

Thus, when God allows suffering, hardship, and pain in our lives and hearts, it is always an opportunity to grow. It is an opportunity to become more like Jesus himself. Moreover, the righteousness for which we strive is for living a life of goodness, truth, and grace – This is something that is terribly missing in the lives of so many living in the world today!

Brothers and Sisters, we, simply, must put on the mind of God and the mind of Jesus. We must open ourselves to the Holy Spirit! We must learn to see ourselves and all others – even our enemies – as of inherent value in the mind of God. This will be possible if we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit who once led Jesus through all he experienced. And it was the Father who raised him up!

Let us pray that it can also be so with us!

Amen.

August 25, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra

