

[Readings: Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41; Psalm 30; Rev. 5:11-14; John 21:1-19]

The way of the Kingdom bears little resemblance to the way of the law. Its means, its motives, and its goals often move like a crosscurrent against the accepted moral code. The Pharisees and Jesus once had a telling exchange that underscored the difference between these ways. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people cried hosannas to the King, which alarmed the religious leaders who feared a riot and ensuing crackdown. So the Pharisees ordered Him bluntly, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Being people of the law, they assume that a quick command from the leadership will get the crowds in line. This is the assumption of lawgivers: that obedience is the answer to every conflict, and obedience can be enforced.

But in the way of the Kingdom, the coercive power of law is replaced by the persuasive power of love. The human will may choose to lay itself down, but it cannot be throttled into submission. Love is the only command to which the citizen of the Kingdom cheerfully complies. So Jesus replies: "I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!" Chances are, as people of the law, the Pharisees found this answer inscrutable.

A few months and one significant crucifixion later, the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin have called the apostles before them. This is not their first post-Easter run-in, which is evident by the remarks of the high priest: "We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name?" Once again, the law people are at a total loss to comprehend the Kingdom people. The religious leaders actually seem to expect that the apostles would do as they're told!

Peter patiently explains, "We must obey God rather than men." He presents what is by now his "Soundbite Gospel," affirms the call to testify to this, and draws upon the further witness of the Holy Spirit. This is the only testimony Peter offers. It is the same in the court of the Sanhedrin as on the streets of Jerusalem.

But of course, this liberating message given so freely has no impact on the people of the law. They repeat the injunction not to teach in "that name" and let

the apostles go. Do they really think reissuing the same order will have a different effect this time? Do they really believe they can command a person's soul by simply insisting?

The differences between the way of the Kingdom and the way of the law show up in the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus. If Jesus were a proponent of lawful living, he would have had a few well-chosen words of correction to administer to His followers, who had failed in their allegiances all across the board. But instead, Jesus does what love longs to do: He comforts Mary in the garden, offers peace to his friends huddled in the upper room, He goes out of his way to include Thomas, who had excluded himself, and makes breakfast for his friends when they haven't been able to catch a bite all night.

And when Jesus speaks privately to Peter, who is haunted by mortification since His denial, the words are only about love. He doesn't ask Peter for an apology, a pledge of allegiance, or a testimony of faith. Jesus simply asks, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Jesus trusts that if He has Peter's love, all the rest will be added besides.

Peter offers his love three times, vigorously and with no small amount of distress for being asked more than once. In response, Jesus commissions him to serve. No special skills are required beyond love, evidently.

Peter's not much of a fisherman, and there's no guarantee he'll make a better shepherd. But his love will cover a multitude of faults, all the way to a glorious death only a lover could embrace.

What if WE loved, instead of insisting on our rights, on what's due us in matters of fairness, on the submission of others to the letter of law and principle? What if WE focused our attention on the mandate to love and didn't fixate on the response of others around us?

What if WE expressed our love in service to others, and our own fidelity to that call became the only moral code that concerned us?

For too long, religious people have been tempted to cling to rules as a source of justification, as well as a whip and chair to get our neighbors into line or to condemn them in our hearts. Our forgiveness is contingent on apology, and

our love is timidly and conditionally given. If love became our starting point, we might end up in quite a surprising place.

This weekend, we honor two groups whose loving service have shown their fidelity and love for St. Martin de Porres Parish. The Pope Pius X Knights of Columbus Council 3848 celebrate this month their 65th anniversary of Unity, Fraternity and Charity. As Chaplain of this local council, I congratulate and thank you brother Knights for your presence in our parish community. There are representatives from our District and from the State. As well as our current Grand Knight, Kevin Labudde and Past Grand Knight Jerome Kunert. I would like to acknowledge and any other Past Grand Knights now. Would you please stand and accept our welcome and thanks?

The following history of the Council was prepared by Past Grand Knight Jerome Kunert on December 12th, 2016.

St. Pius X Council #3848 was brought into existence in the mid 1950's largely through the efforts of two individuals; Brother Knight Joe DeMuch and Father Frank Walsh, then-Pastor of St. Anne Parish.

These two men, along with District Deputy Edwin Theut, a Warren businessman, were the driving force behind the formation of our Council. Joe and Father Walsh were men of vision and ambition. They had the foresight to realize that the City of Warren would be expanding enormously over the next ten to twenty years, and that there would be a need for more than one council in this area. Sheer determination, burning enthusiasm and hours of painstaking thought and legwork on the part of these men finally overcame any and all obstacles.

The property and building, which originally housed the first church of St. Anne in Warren, was procured in 1953. Their charter was received on May 9, 1954 with a charter class numbering 60 men.

As fate would have it, while Joe DeMuch was on Mackinac Island attending the annual K of C State Convention, the building which housed the council was completely demolished by fire, leaving the newly-elected Grand

Knight with the formidable task of rebuilding and holding together its membership.

Through the efforts of many men, they were able to build the K of C Hall which was dedicated in 1958. The Knights of Columbus are justifiably proud of the many civic, social, fraternal and religious activities which their council has sponsored over the past years. The Council declined over the years and was suppressed in 2010.

In January of 2014 a group of men from St. Martin de Porres Parish in Warren met with District Deputy Harry Deneweth about restarting the council as a parish council at St. Martin de Porres. Most board positions were filled that night and the first business meeting was held on March 13, 2014 in the parish hall. I arrived three months later and was asked to become their Chaplain. This Council continues to be of service to me and to St. Martin de Porres Church.

We also welcome and honor the Active Christian Women's Club of St. Martin de Porres Parish, who have been a venerable parish group since the earliest years of our parish. Their three-fold mission is Spiritual, Social and Service. They are here this weekend for their Corporate Communion. I welcome them, and on behalf of a grateful parish, I thank the ACWC for their fidelity, dedication and generosity. They give to the parish and to the larger community.

This weekend, we also observe the start of our annual Catholic Services Appeal. The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Advancing this mission requires our clergy, religious, and lay faithful to unite in our common goal of pursuing the pastoral priorities of the larger Church.

For over 30 years, the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) of the Archdiocese of Detroit has been a successful way to advance our mission.

The Archdiocese of Detroit is our Mother Church, one of three "Mothers" we honor during the month of May: Holy Mother Church, the Mother Church of the Archdiocese of Detroit, and our natural and spiritual mothers.

Together, as Christian stewards, we live out the Gospel mission of our Church through our support of the CSA. The ministries, programs and services

funded by our annual appeal reach every soul in our six-county Archdiocese, strengthening urban and rural faith communities alike. No one individual or parish could possibly accomplish all these good works themselves. Truly, the CSA transforms our diverse family of believers into, in the words of Pope Francis, and Archbishop Allen Vigneron, a “band of joyful missionary disciples.”

We are grateful to our parish and archdiocesan staff and lay volunteers who do the hard work of annually conducting the CSA. We are grateful to our many faithful stewards who so generously give their treasure to the CSA, benefiting all their brothers and sisters in Christ throughout southeast Michigan. Last week, we exceeded our 2018 goal by \$350; this year’s target is \$750 higher.

Fully living as a disciple of Jesus Christ requires following his commission to make disciples — *Opening Doors to Witness Christ* to others. We accomplish this when we allow his Good News to inspire joyful words and deeds each day. As we become conscious witnesses to God’s everlasting mercy, we unleash the Gospel to everyone we meet. Each year when we support the CSA, we renew this opportunity to witness Jesus. The CSA fuels the engine of the Gospel mission of our Archdiocese — more than 100 ministries touching every soul in southeast Michigan. The spirit of joining together to witness Christ in carrying out these works of mercy and to become a “joyful band” of missionary disciples.

ALLELUIA and AMEN!