

3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Sunday  
January 23, 2022  
“Habitual Behaviors: Good or Bad?”

Neh 8:2...10  
1 Cor 12:12-30  
Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all have habitual ways of doing things. Each of us does certain things in a particular way. It is a way that makes life easier for us. And it gives us satisfaction when we complete a task with the desired outcome.

We also have habitual ways of dealing with other people. This is influenced by our upbringing, our education, our society, and our culture. Many of these behaviors are favorable to everyone involved. However, some of them are harmful. They are especially so, when they are rooted in prejudice, bigotry, power, selfishness, and a culture that is godless and self-serving!

Consequently, it can be a great shock and a blow to our egos when we discover and realize that some behaviors are wrong. There is no justification for them. Moreover, changing them can be particularly difficult when those around us behave in the same misguided way!

The exiles who returned to the destroyed Jerusalem experienced this same rude awakening. They had lived among the pagans in Babylon for 3 or 4 generations. All they knew about their religious obligations was handed down from parents and grandparents. Naturally, they were surprised when the written Law of Moses was discovered in the rubble of the ruined Temple.

However, the people became sad when they realized the implications and obligations of that Law for themselves. They would have to change. Even though they had remained faithful to the Lord God, there were changes in attitudes and behavior that must be made.

Fortunately, their leadership saw all the benefits in the Law that God had given to Moses. And if the people would embrace this Law, things would go well for each of them and for the whole community of Israel.

So, the leaders proclaimed a time of celebration. The People were to rejoice that they now had a better way to live and serve the Lord God. They were to eat and drink heartily. But they were also to become mindful of those who had little or nothing at all – and share, generously, with them!

Jesus takes up this same theme in the Gospel of Luke. He reads from the prophet Isaiah. He proclaims a time of celebration – a time for renewal and restoration. And he expects his hearers to make changes in their own behaviors to bring about what God wanted for everyone else. The poor should not go hungry – No one should be oppressed or held captive as a slave – And those with disabilities must be helped to become whole!

The complete message of Jesus is that each of us must be for others, what he, himself, was for everyone. Therefore, our habits of selfishness must die. We must, truly, learn the new habits that every disciple should exemplify. And we will give glory to God if we learn to behave in every way as His children should!

In the New Testament passage, the Christians of Corinth had been arguing about what spiritual gifts were the most important. Paul corrects them by teaching that every gift is important. God's gifts and blessings are given to benefit the whole community. No matter who we are and what we do, each of us has a particular role in fostering the good of the community. Furthermore, the Christian Community is the Body of Christ. Each member is an extension of Jesus in our particular place and time. Our baptism makes us one with Jesus – And the Holy Spirit infuses us all with its divine presence.

Brothers and Sisters, from all that has been said, it should be evident that it is time to examine our habitual behaviors. We should take an honest look at all of our habits. Which of them further the Reign of God here – as well as the Kingdom of Heaven? Which are those that make me and others better people? Which are those that are harmful? Where are my blind spots? How much am I influenced or determined by my preconditioning and the surrounding pagan culture? What must I change in myself to make the world a better place?

Jesus came for our eternal salvation. He came to liberate us from our sinfulness. He came to make the world a better place. As disciples and members of his Mystical Body, we are called to share in his work!

So, let us pray that God gives us the insight we need, the courage to change, and the steadfastness of faithfulness!

Amen.

January 23, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra