

15th Ordinary Sunday
July 10, 2022
“Our Mistakes, Sins, and God’s Law”

Dt 30:10-14
Col 1:15-20
Lk 10:25-37

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all make mistakes. Try as we might to do things well, we, often, make mistakes anyway. Some mistakes are relatively minor – and can be easily corrected. Others can be dangerous and even life-threatening for ourselves or for others.

We can make mistakes while working, while recreating, in our relationships – as well as regarding our personal health and well-being.

In order to make everything we do as mistake-free as possible, we have laws, rules, protocols, directions, and guidelines to follow.

However, the most serious mistakes we can make are always in the moral realm – Because moral mistakes damage our soul and spirit – They can also damage the souls and spirits of others.

Moral mistakes are about good and evil. They are sins against God because they place ourselves in the place of God – That is, we freely choose ourselves and our own ways – instead of God and His ways! Hopefully, most people learn about right and wrong from their parents, teachers, and mentors. In most cases, these people serve as models for good behavior and upright living. If they do not, then we are seriously disadvantaged.

We also can learn morality by observation. We can see how others fail and pay for their sins in so many ways. Likewise, we can also learn from our own failures and sins if we are honest with ourselves.

However, no matter who we are – no matter what disadvantages we suffer – there is never any excuse for sin. Today, the Book of Deuteronomy teaches us that God’s law of right and wrong is written in our hearts. It is always there. Only, we must be alert for it and listen to it! It is there in the form of our conscience. Conscience can warn us ahead of time – It can remind us in the midst of what we are doing – And it can reprove us with guilt after we have done wrong!

Nevertheless, our conscience can become dull because we, no longer, heed it or answer to it. Its voice can be drowned out by clamor of the culture – or the pressure of our peers and friends. Likewise, inherited prejudices and hatreds can precondition us against its voice!

In the Gospel of Luke, the scholar of the law had his own biases and mindset when he approached Jesus. He asked about eternal life. And Jesus answered by asking him what was in the law that God gave them. The man answered correctly. He said that we must love the Lord, God, with our total being – with every part of ourselves. Moreover, we must also love our neighbor as we love ourself!

However, for contemporary Hebrews, the meaning of “neighbor” was debated and very limited. Was it only family? Was it also friends? Was it the people next door? It could not be unbelievers – It certainly could never be the enemy – especially never a Samaritan!

This is the reason that Jesus told the story. In doing so, he turned the scholar’s world upside down. The priest and the Levite didn’t want to be contaminated by a possibly dead person. They let ritual law supersede and prevail over God’s law. This was a terrible mistake! But the Samaritan, the hated religious enemy, stopped. He helped the man and paid for his recovery. The Samaritan truly lived by God’s law of love!

Sadly, the scholar couldn’t even utter the name “Samaritan”. All he could say was “the one who treated him with mercy” when Jesus asked who was “neighbor” to the injured man! Hopefully, the scholar learned about his terrible mistakenness. Hopefully, he followed the command of Jesus and learned to love everyone, no matter who they were!

Brothers and Sisters, we will continue to make mistakes. Sadly, we will continue to fail and sin, at times, because of our moral weakness. But we must never excuse ourselves. We must repent and begin anew. We must, continually, open our hearts to all that God’s love asks of us. And with God’s grace, we will, ultimately, be saved through the redemptive death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and brother to us all!

So, let us pray, that we will always persevere
on our journey of growth toward the Kingdom of God.

Amen.
July 10, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra