

17th Ordinary Sunday
July 25, 2021
“Growth in Moral Consciousness”

2 Kgs 4:42-44
Eph 4:1-6
Jn 6:1-15

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Last summer our nation was beset by protests, demonstrations, and very destructive riots. All this was occasioned by the misuse and abuse of power by some few in law enforcement. This summer we are awash with the evil side of the so-called “WOKE” culture.

Being aware of the sins and mistakes of the past – is always a good thing. But canceling history – and pretending that good and true reasons for doing good things did not happen – is wrong! The “WOKE” crowd have removed the statues and memorials of truly great people – They are changing what is documented history in school textbooks – They are segregating whites from others in the military! Yet, these things will do nothing but breed distrust, a new hatred – and a whole new brand of racism! Moreover, any violence perpetrated by the “WOKE” culture is a denial of the very principles espoused by real heroes like Martin Luther King, Jr., himself!

What is so tragic is that the misguided “WOKE” people have no understanding of evolving cultural values; developing human, moral consciousness; and the deeper implications of the teaching of Jesus.

Slavery has been a part of our inhumanity toward one another from ancient times. People with power have almost always sought to enslave others to make life easier for themselves. The Egyptians did it – as did the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans – and even some Christians who were otherwise good people. Jesus said nothing about it directly – St. Paul tolerated it – And, only gradually, did Christians come to understand that slavery was wrong!

The scriptures for today reveal the generosity of God on our behalf. Yet, what took centuries to realize is that we must also be generous. As God is with us – so must we be toward all others. Thus, as God is generous – so must we be generous. As God created us with freedom, so must we let others be free – We can never coerce them in any way!

The Gospel of John tells us that the crowd followed Jesus because of the signs he worked in curing the sick. Today, Jesus does something for everyone in the crowd to prepare them for a very difficult teaching that will come in the future. The boy was wonderfully generous in giving up the lunch that his mother insisted he take. With that small amount of bread and fish, Jesus fed them all – There were even plenty of leftovers!

However, the crowd had come for the wrong reasons. They wanted a king who would make life easier for them – a king who would free them from Roman oppression. They were not ready for a king who would bring a true and different freedom – a freedom of heart, mind, soul, and spirit, instead! So Jesus ran away to escape their misguidedness and spiritual immaturity.

When the prophet Elisha was given a special offering of bread to honor him for his godly signs and cures – he surprised everyone. He shared God’s goodness without hesitation. He fed all those who were present, including any servants. He made their lives easier at least for a moment. Perhaps, he hoped to raise their appreciation for God, Himself – as well as their own moral consciousness to some small extent.

In the New Testament reading, St. Paul, who was a prisoner, teaches us that no matter what we suffer from others, we must always respond in the manner of Jesus. Consequently, no matter how much we wish to stop evil and right the wrongs of injustice anywhere – we must first change anything violent or destructive in ourselves.

We must: “live in the manner of the call we have received –
– with humility and gentleness –
– with patience, bearing with one another through love –
– striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Because if we are authentic disciples we are:
– “one body and one spirit” –
– We are in: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism –
– one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all”!

Brothers and Sisters, there will always be evil in the world. But we can’t fight evil with another evil. We can never cancel truth with denial or lies. We can’t pretend the past did not exist – as so many are doing today. Instead, let us pray that we can bring the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus to our culture and to our nation – And may we await the gradual awakening of everyone’s moral consciousness with the patience and love of Jesus, himself!

Amen.

July 25, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra