

31st. SUNDAY ON ORDINARY TIME November 5, 2006

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,... you shall love your neighbour as yourself”

Introduction:

Jesus reminds us today of the Great Commandment, which has two parts: love God, love your neighbour. We can ask ourselves: how much do we love God? How much do we love our neighbour? Is there another love that we are neglecting?

1) Love of Creation for our Neighbour’s Sake

1. The Bible says: “God loves all that he has made” – all creation.

To be like God, we must love all creation.

2. God has given us the earth to be our home; we hear in the First Reading how God gave the people of Israel “a land flowing with milk and honey”

God has given us the goods of the earth to sustain us. God wants everyone to have an income sufficient to provide for themselves and their families.

3. Loving our neighbour includes caring for and protecting the earth and its goods that our neighbour needs.

2) The Ecological Crisis

1. Our earth today is being depleted and destroyed in many ways: deforestation, the extinction of many species of creatures, climate change, contamination of air and water, soil erosion, are some of these.

2. We have an unprecedented and accelerating ecological crisis. The ecosystem means all that exists, all of creation, including ourselves.

3. We can see how air and water contamination is harming many of our brothers and sisters of the human race, especially in poor countries. But we suffer here too. Remember the Walkerton tragedy from contaminated water. Over one billion people do not have access to safe drinking water.

4. The ecological crisis affects all of us. For instance, we are experiencing the effects of climate change, caused by what we putting into the atmosphere.

3) The Ecological Crisis and Our Relationship with God

1. Not only is the ecological crisis harming us physically, it’s harming our relationship with God.

2. “To enter into ever deeper relationship with God – this lover of Life – entails striving to develop right relations with nature (as well) as other human beings. God reveals himself to us, (his love and care for us), in the natural world, yet we humans are presently destroying creation. In destroying creation, we are limiting our ability to know and love God.” (CCCB Past. Letter “You Love All That Exists”, Oct. 4/03, no.3)

3. “The ecological crisis is a moral issue and the responsibility of everyone” said Pope John Paul. “ Care for the environment is not an option. In the Christian perspective, it forms an integral part of our personal life and of life in society. Not to care for the environment is to ignore the Creator’s plan for all of creation and results in an alienation of the human person” (alienation from God and from our fellow human beings) (CCCB Past.Letter above, no. 3)

4. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that harming our ecological system, our environment , is against the 7th. Commandment. The 7th. Commandment enjoins us to have respect and care for the property of others. This includes respect and care for God’s earth.

4) The Crisis with Water

1. The profit making use of water is an example of what we are facing. Water is now being pursued by giant corporations as a profit making venture. Already selling water is a 400 billion profit driven industry. (Can. Centre for Policy Alternatives Monitor, July/August 2006, p. 18) People in poor countries are being charged an exorbitant amount for water sold by these corporations, an amount they cannot afford.

2. Water is a human right, a necessity for life. Everyone should have free access to water.

3. Strangely the Canadian government denied there is a human right to water at the UN Human Rights Commission in 2002. saying “Canada does not accept that there is a right to drinking water and sanitation” (CCPA Monitor July/August p. 19). As far as I know, this is still the position of our Government.

5) The Incarnation of Jesus and All Creation

1. “Through his Incarnation (taking human flesh in our world), Jesus Christ not only entered and embraced our humanity: he also entered and embraced all of God’s creation. Thus all creatures, great and small, are consecrated in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.” (CCCB Past. Letter no. 7)

2. Christ now in his Eucharistic Presence gathers up to himself the universe of nature and all human beings and so gives to the whole world its fullness.

3. In the Mass, we can think of Christ in the Host radiating upon all of humanity and all of the material world of nature, his flames of love, drawing all things to himself for their fulfillment.

6) Contemplation of Nature

1. We need to deepen our capacity to appreciate the wonders of nature. Nature speaks to us of the beauty and wonder of God, our Creator.

2. We can learn to express faith and love as we contemplate God working in nature.

3. In urban areas we are not close to nature. We need to go out into the fields and forests and absorb all that is around us, using all our senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell. Get your children to embrace nature. (CCCB Past. Letter no. 15)

7) Our Mass

1. The people of Israel knew that care for the earth was part of their allegiance to God. In their Covenant with God, they vowed to love and serve God, their fellow human beings, and to care for the earth entrusted to them by God.
2. This Covenant is now continues with us, fulfilled in the Sacrifice of Christ:
“this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant”
3. As we renew and strengthen our Covenant in Jesus in this Mass, we can obtain his power for the giving of ourselves as he makes the full giving of himself.
4. Let us pray that Jesus may work in us to repair some of creation’s wounds and to help those who have less access to the benefits of God’s bountiful creation.

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Cf. Pope John Paul’s World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1990, on Ecology,
obtainable on Vatican website: www.vatican.va)
Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, chap. 10: Safeguarding
the Environment
Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2415-2418, Respect for the Integrity of
Creation

“ Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice”

Introduction:

Kingdoms? Do we have much enthusiasm for kingdoms?

Democracy is what we want, what we're used to.

1) Meaning of Christ's Kingdom

1. Purpose of democracy is the common good, the good of all, making things good for everyone.
2. The common good means that the organizing of all the resources of society is shared, so that no one is in want, or ignored, or discriminated.
3. It means that each person has freedom and opportunity to develop as a person, and to be respected and valued in his or her dignity as a person.
4. This is what the Kingdom of Christ is about. But it lifts people to a new level. Jesus says: “My kingdom is not from this world”. It cannot come from this world because it transforms people in the power of the Spirit.
5. Christ's Kingdom fulfills all that democracy strives for and never achieves, because it is so often perverted by the greed and power seeking of some who exclude others.
6. It is through Christ's saving death on the Cross that greed and power seeking are overcome.
7. Through his saving death, Christ brings people of every race and language to be united together in him as sons and daughters of God, part of him and part of each other. In his Kingdom all persons are respected for their individual dignity as sons and daughters of God, and accepted for themselves.

2) Christ Establishes his Kingdom by his Saving Death

1. Jesus came to establish his Kingdom through his Death and Resurrection, his saving death that we are witnessing in today's Gospel.
2. Jesus says to Pilate: “I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice”, everyone who wants truth.
3. Pilate ignores the truth he can find in Christ, the truth the world so desperately needs.
4. Jesus would tell him that God is our loving Father, our Creator. God wants all of us, more eagerly than any earthly parent, to share his life with us, and be in us, as Jesus is in him. He forgives and wipes away our sins that block us from being united in love with him.
5. If we belong to the truth, if we see the truth in Jesus, we need to make choices: to be with Christ, basing our lives on his truth, - or going away from him.

3) Our Call as a Church

1. Christ's Kingdom is not complete. It will keep growing until the end of time.
2. The mission of the Church is to extend Christ's Kingdom, through us, the members of the Church.
3. By our mutual care and support, by our respect for each person, which draw people to Christ, we keep his Kingdom growing. Christ works through us to unfold his truth to others.
4. "For men and women on the fringes of society, rejected or excluded from what the rest of us enjoy, the Kingdom of God appears first and foremost as their hope." (Canadian Bishops)
5. It can only appear as their hope if we make the Church and our actions as members of the Church, show that the Kingdom of God is present in us. We must show that we are a Church that serves the poor, the afflicted, the downtrodden.

4) What Can We Do?

1. So many groups and parts of our country strive for their own goals, and forget about the common good. There is economic insecurity and uncertainty and stress. There are so many poor and homeless. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.
2. Our Bishops tell us: "Each of us must join in the struggle for social change. We must know the Social Teaching of the Church and apply it to our economic and political life."
3. What can we do to change things? We can't change the system. As individuals we can't. It's like trying to swim upstream against the strong flow of the current.
4. But there is the solution that the Church's Social Teaching gives us. To change the system, to achieve social justice, requires that we work with others.
5. Social justice is a specific virtue. It obliges us to work with others to change unjust systems, structures and practices, so they conform to the common good, the good of everyone.
6. We start in every group we are in. Getting a few others to work with us, we work together for the common good of the group, whatever best helps each member of the group: in our workplace or profession, in our parish, school, community, in government circles, if we belong to one. We work for other groups that our group affects.

5) Our Family and Our Parish

1. We start in our family and in our parish. Husband and wife, brothers and sisters, are called to work together for the good of all in the family. Love and care for one another are fostered and extended to others outside the family.
2. Members of a parish are called to work together for the good of all in the parish, to be a parish that shows its care and help for everyone, how the members work together for every good cause, especially for justice for the poor.
3. Do we have this vision of our parish? Of what we are here to do? To be a parish is much more than coming to Mass. A parish is a body of people joined together in Christ, in whom Christ lives and works.

6) Our Mass

1. Every Mass is Christ's call to us to reach out to all around us, to see in them part of Christ, to cherish and care for them, and thus establish his Kingdom.
2. Christ has made his Covenant bond with us through his Blood. In every Mass we hear his words: "this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant".
3. As we offer ourselves with Christ, he renews and strengthens us to give of ourselves to him and to others, as he so totally gives himself.
4. Let us ask him to give us his power so that we may work in him for his Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

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Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1877- 1948; 2419-2463

To keep informed on current economic and political issues and social justice, visit these websites: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: www.policyalternatives.ca
KAIROS: Ecumenical Justice Initiatives: www.kairoscanada.org
Social Affairs Office, CCCB: www.cccb.ca
CCODevelopment and Peace: www.devp.org

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