

July 10, 2022 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bishop Bradley's Homily

This morning's Sacred Readings for this 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time could not be more appropriate to remind us of the Eternal Truth that God's Word has been given to us in time to speak to the hearts of God's people for all time. Our First Reading, from the Book of Deuteronomy, is a perfect example of that.

The Book of Deuteronomy is the final book of what is known as the Pentateuch in the Old Testament---the first 5 books that summarize the very beginning of God's Revelation to us, His human creation. Those first 5 sacred books recount God's creation of the entire world, including the apex of all creation----the human person----made in the image and likeness of God, with the same abilities of God to love, but also because of the great gift of free will, with the ability to not love---to turn away from God----to choose sin over God's ways.

These first 5 Books teach us that from the very beginning---even immediately after the Original Sin---God did everything He possibly could to call us back to Him----to re-establish and strengthen the Covenant which God revealed to us, first thru Abraham, then thru Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), and most dramatically through Moses.

Moses is the Chosen one of God to lead God's People out of bondage/slavery in Egypt, thru the Desert for 40 years, and right up to the border of the Promised Land. That is where we find him in today's Reading. Since Moses knew that he was near the end of his life and would not be able to accompany his people into the Promised Land, Moses reminded the people how close---how near---how intimate God's Saving Word is to them! God's Word isn't high up in the sky; they don't have to figure out how to try to reach it; nor is God's Word across the sea. No----God's Word is already within them----it is in their mouths---in their hearts---in their very souls. And Moses pleads: *"If only you would heed the Voice of the Lord, your God and keep His commandments and statutes....if only you would return to the Lord, your God, (and love Him) with all your heart and all your soul."*

But God's People continued to be fickle and foolish and sinful; they didn't pay attention to Moses or the Patriarchs before him; they didn't pay attention to the Judges, nor to the Prophets who came after him. They could not seem to grasp

how critically important----how much a matter of spiritual life and death---it was for them to maintain the Covenant with God.

And still, God's Love for His people is unconditional and unending; so, God found the perfect "time"----*"the fullness of time"*----when God said : **"Now is the time"**---when God's Word was proclaimed so dramatically that His *"Word became Flesh and dwelt among us"*.

And that's what we heard St. Paul reflecting on so beautifully in this morning's 2nd Reading from his Letter to the Colossians: *"Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation."* St. Paul also goes on to tell us that even though Jesus is the Word of God made Flesh Who came to not only dwell among us but to bring us salvation through His suffering, death and resurrection, that He is also *"before all things, and in Him all things hold together...and in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell."* Second only to His gift of salvation is the gift that Jesus gave to us of His Church: *"Jesus is the head of the Body, the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He Himself might be preeminent."*

So, God's Sacred Word today reminds us that God has done absolutely everything that He can do to be present to us and to make us present to Him. He has sent us Jesus our Savior; He has given us the Church and the Sacraments; He has given us unlimited resources and opportunities to be one with Him and with one another. What is our response? What is our choice? When will we decide to fulfill God's commands, and live in His ways, and as Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets, choose to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength, AND to love our neighbor as we love ourselves?

That's what today's Gospel is all about. One of the Scholars of the Jewish Law, who was clearly more-than-a-little interested in Jesus' teachings, posed a very important question to Jesus. In fact, it's the most important question that every human being must deal with at some point; and it's a question, I hope, that all of us have already asked and have had answered for ourselves: *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* Being a good Teacher, Jesus answers the question with another question---*"What is written in the Law---how do you read it?"* The scholar, being very scholar-ly, answered immediately with a very insightful answer----the answer that he clearly had heard Jesus give at some other instruction: to love God completely AND to love your neighbor as yourself. But when Jesus told him he was correct, and added *"do this and you will live"*, the

scholar asked for clarification, but only about the last part: *“And who is my neighbor?”* That’s when Jesus taught one of His greatest and most meaningful parables: the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We know this parable well. It’s clear; it’s challenging; it’s also---problematic.

What made this Parable such a problem was that Jesus made a “hated Samaritan” the “hero” of the Parable----not the priest, not the Levite, not even an ordinary Jewish person. No, Jesus was holding up one of those despised and awful Samaritans as the one who clearly understood what “being neighbor” meant. Clearly the point Jesus is making is that all people are “our neighbors”.

That sounds so simple; yet, as we all know, that’s easier said than done, isn’t it? If Jesus was telling this Parable today, who might be cast in the place of the Samaritan?

We’re seeing that graphically displayed in our own country right now as people are divided more deeply now about racial, political, and value of human life-issues than perhaps ever before. It seems like every issue becomes complicated and controversial over basic human differences. That controversy expresses itself in constant acts of violence, protests that are filled with hatred and vitriol, and a growing number of mass shootings taking the lives of countless innocent people, most recently on the Fourth of July mass shooting at an Independence Day Parade of all places just a week ago in a northern Chicago suburb.

And we’re seeing this dramatically being played out in the world with the increasing violence and terrorism in every part of the world. Some people cannot see beyond religious/ethnic differences----even among our fellow citizens, those who think differently from those who consider their opinions politically correct have become the most hated and the most feared of all enemies.

The point of Jesus’ parable is that if we want to “inherit eternal life”, and if we want to fulfill the basic commands of God, to love Him and to love one another regardless of the color of their skin or their ethnic background or their religious identity or even their sexual orientation----then we must *“Go, and do the same.”*

We must love our neighbor. We must have compassion for those who are suffering and being mistreated.

When we do that, then we have truly not just “heard” God’s Word, but we have “listened” with an open heart. We must be “hearers” and “doers” of God’s

Word. We must be recipients of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, but also the sharers of those same Gifts. As people baptized and confirmed into Christ, we have received the Gifts of the Holy Spirit---wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord; and we are challenged always put those Gifts to good use in our daily lives. And when we do, we will be people whose lives demonstrate the Fruits of the Holy Spirit: in our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, goodness, modesty, self-control and chastity. And, most importantly, we must always use those gifts and demonstrate those fruits in union with Jesus, the Head of the Body, the Church.

This 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to re-commit ourselves to use the Gifts that God's Holy Spirit bestows upon all of us, and always do what we do, for the good of the Church and the spread of the Faith. As we heard so beautifully proclaimed in our Psalm Response today: *"Your words, Lord, are Spirit and Life"*.

Now is the time to proclaim those words. As Jesus shows us, now is the time to *"go and do the same"*---to love God and to love our neighbor with compassion and mercy.

God bless you!