

Preaching on Whole Person Care Sunday

October 29, 2017

([The readings may be found here.](#))

- Ideas from the First Reading
 - The Lord calls us to a radical type of care for others: widows, orphans, foreigners, those who might not pay us back, who may not be able to provide any recompense for being helped.
 - The mandate of caring for widows, orphans and foreigners runs deep through scripture, not just because these particular groups of individuals have great needs, but because we ourselves sometimes experience these various states in life too.
 - There is an allegory of our relationship with the Lord: we are “widows” to a happiness lost, and we would be orphaned in this world without our heavenly Father.
 - Though we deserve nothing from God, he cares for us and tends to our every need.
 - How are we imaging this same selfless love in our society and culture? What are we doing to love those in most need without any expectation of receiving something in return? How do we care for people in all stages of life, as we too would want to be cared for, and especially at the end of life?
- Ideas from the Second Reading
 - St. Paul’s was living the gospel so carefully that he was able to describe himself as a model of Christian living, that the Thessalonians could imitate him along with Jesus.
 - It’s truly a bold claim, one that few of us would dare to say, that others should imitate what we are doing personally.
 - Yet that is ultimately how deeply the gospel message should change us: we should be following Jesus so closely as to be models and examples to others.
 - How will faith penetrating our lives so much that our very lives will be exemplary to a world and society enveloped in so much darkness? Does my life say anything about how I value those who are suffering, dying, or in need of care and compassion?
- Ideas from the Gospel
 - In the gospel of Matthew, the two greatest commandments have this fascinating origin: they arise at the instigation of another person, from somebody trying to test Jesus. And Jesus is response is telling, as he is not content to simply provide the scholar of the law with a single commandment, but rather to teach how love of God must be intimately tied to our love of neighbor.

- In doing so, Jesus identifies not only the two greatest commandments, but also drives a very fundamental point home: it is impossible to disconnect some of God's laws from others, as they are intrinsically bound up together.
- Sadly, our tries to justify euthanasia or "physician assisted suicide" precisely by separating essential values from each other. Euthanasia is "justified" by trying to take one principle (such as trying to ease the sufferings of an individual) and divorcing it from the other ways we are called to care for our neighbor (accompanying the other through trial and suffering as Jesus does for us, caring for the basic needs of the sick and the dying, helping others recognize the value of their life not as a burden but a blessing, etc.).
- Attending to the needs of our neighbors means not only caring for them with certain isolated values, or only at certain points in their lives (when their "productivity" is high, when their "potential" is evident, when their mind is well), but to be there for them through the totality of their lives, even in the difficult times that might arise at the end of life.
- We are living fully the Christian life when we embrace the totality of Jesus' teachings, and love even when it means giving of our whole heart, mind, and soul.
- In the first reading, the Lord proclaims, "If [your neighbor] cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate." As Jesus will later demonstrate to us, to be compassionate towards our neighbors does not mean simply eliminating their sufferings, but to be there with them and for them in their many needs.
- Thus we are truly compassionate when we walk with others, for that is how God himself is with us in our time of trial as well.