

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 26, 2015

**“When the people saw what He had done, they said, “This is truly the prophet, the one who is to come into the world.”**

If we are to consider ourselves Christian, there are a few basic things that we need to hold in common in order to be a Christian Community. One of these is the belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving God. Two, is the belief in the person of Jesus Christ, equally human and divine, who lived, taught, suffered, died and rose again, and is the Son of God and will come again. Three is the belief in the Holy Spirit, who comes forth from the Father. Four is that all three persons are the one true God. From this basis, everything that we are about emanates.

The ancient Israelites were the first to whom the One, True God was revealed. Other gods existed in the minds of other peoples of the world, but in the end, they were human constructs attempting to explain phenomena they could not understand. This is true since these gods never made contact with human beings as YHWH did with the Israelites. We may remember some of these ancient ‘gods:’ Ra and Osiris of Egypt, Baal (the fertility goddess) of the near east, and Dionysus of Greece. Not a single one of these is recorded as communicating with human beings in any of the chronicles of these ancient cultures. This is what makes YHWH different. He has communicated with mankind since the very beginning, up through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and on and on and on. Then, just over 2000 years ago, a woman was born to the saints we remember today: Sts. Joachim and Anna. That

woman was Mary who would become the chosen vessel to conceive and bring to humankind the one and only Son of God, Jesus. Jesus was fully God and fully human. Never before or since in human history as a god done what YHWH did... break through the plane of time and live, grow, work, play and teach among His people.

This is truly a miraculous thing. This God, who had made covenants with His chosen people, the Israelites for about 6,000 years... and those same Israelites who kept breaking the covenants over and over again, received the privilege of having YHWH in the form of Jesus the Christ, among them. Some saw Him for who He truly was... as the people in today's Gospel after the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Some though, were threatened by Him and couldn't believe that He was the one that had been promised for so long throughout scripture up until that very time.

So, when we consider ourselves Christian, it is because we believe that the personal God, YHWH, is real and sent His only Son to be among us and reveal how He wants us to live, and that He will come again in His glory. This core is the core of what we in the Church call moral theology. Moral Theology is that which seeks to make understandable the truth that the One, True God has revealed to us, as well as to give us ways to live that follow those revelations.

As a bit of a moral theologian, I often encounter those who have no use for moral theology... believing it to be a set of needless rules that are set up to take away our freedoms. This homily series, based off of the deeper meaning of Jesus' Bread of Life discourse in the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John, is meant to dispel that notion. Moral

Theology is about love and true freedom. It is about love and freedom on a few different levels:

- The love God had for us when He created us
- The love God wants us to share with others
- The actualization of the freedom that He created us with
- The means by which we can live in true freedom
- The ways we can avoid the enslavement of sin, and the death of our souls when we become mired in that sin

Now this week, I am laying out the general principles that will be guiding our look at what it means to have a full and all-encompassing relationship with God, starting next week we will start to look at how these are applied to each of these four areas: How this affects me and you personally; how it defines the true meaning of love; how that love is manifested in true justice; and finally how we can take all of this and live out our vocation in the world as a true Christian man or woman.

To this end, let's take a quick look at the main thrust of today's Gospel passage- the multiplication of loaves and fishes. This is probably one of the best known Gospel passages in Scripture. I remember in religion class in grade school even having to do a crayon drawing of this scene... so I believe that it is familiar to all of us. On the surface, it seems that this merely fills a physical hunger. While that physical hunger was there for the crowds, it is because they were spending the bulk of 2-3 days listening to Jesus. This belies a deeper hunger... a hunger for the truth. The truth that can only be found in God, and in the case of the crowds in the person of God's Son,

Jesus. The physical hunger was provided for... miraculously... so that the deeper hunger for the truth that they were seeking could continue to be filled.

Some may ask, what is this truth He was teaching? This is found throughout Scripture, since the truths He was teaching is eternal... unchanging. They were as correct then as they are in 2015. And then, just like today, each and every single person had a choice as to what they would follow. There are 3 very simple choices... choices we still have today:

- The truth that comes from the personal God YHWH
- The truth that comes from other people (i.e. the Satanic Temple who put up the statue of Baphomet yesterday in the city)
- The truth that we have from ourselves

Looked at in this light, I think that there is one truth of these three that trumps all the others, and that is the truth that comes from the personal God YHWH. The other two, honestly, cannot be trusted as they come from sources detached from the Creator of all. Because of that, the truth that man teaches, if it not the truth that has been passed down through the generations through Apostolic Succession, can be corrupted. It for sure can contain elements of the truth, but because man is imperfect, any deviation from the Truth taught by the One True God will not be real truth.

It is here that we can come into problems. Sometimes the truth that comes from YHWH is not what we want to hear. It can make us uncomfortable. It can make us feel guilty about things we have done or allowed in our lives. It can question, at

times, the very idea we have about who we really are. Sometimes the truth is easy, but most times it is not, and that is due to the deformed natural inclinations that we are born with as the result of sin having entered the world. The good news is that all is not lost... and that is why God is a personal God and also why He sent His Son to teach us and to save us.

One more thing about the Truth. The Truth is liberating. It is only in the Truth that we find true freedom. Let's just think about this for a moment. When we sin, usually we feel guilty. If we sin against someone else, our tendency is to avoid that person or people. Doing this, are we not placing ourselves in some type of bondage... in some type of exile? And if because of our sin, the other person wants to avoid us, then are we not being punished as well?

It is from this point that we will commence next Sunday in talking about who we are in relationship to God. For now, ponder on the question of which of the three truths you want to base your life on from this point forward: The truth that comes from yourself; the truth that comes from other human beings; or the truth that comes from the personal God YHWH. Your answer to this can indicate what Christianity and Christ means to you.