

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 25, 2020

“The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

I want to begin today with a confession of sorts. As I read Matthew 22:39 (love neighbor as yourself), I found a bit of unintended dark humor in Jesus’ words. In our overly political, easily offended society, if we are supposed to love each other as we love ourselves, then there is some serious self-hatred floating around. Listening to the names people are called, reading the articles people write, we sure are a classy bunch. Sometimes, you just have to use a Bobby Bowden quote - “Dadgum,” and shake your head at our society.

Happily though, this level of anger and intolerance cannot be sustained. Eventually people just get tired of being hateful, and start to look for other ways to live. Jesus and our Catholic Church have provided us the means to live a life of love. To begin with, we must first realize that all possess the potential to become blinded by our emotions toward the reality of our lives. Our mind’s eye has to be trained to view God’s created beauty which surrounds us at every moment. Too often we can see the beauty of nature from our own biased viewpoint instead of praising the Wisdom and Order (God) which guides nature to produce truly magnificent scenes. One person may see the natural effects of erosion over centuries; another may see the Grand Canyon. What do we see when we step outside?

Once we are able to begin to see the beautiful images of God through His created universe, then we can reexamine the way we see images of God in each other. One of the first lessons we all must remember comes from Shakespeare - *“All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women, merely players.”* Rarely do we reveal our true selves publicly. We project to the world an image of who we want others to see when they look at us. I believe we do this as a form of protection. We do not want to be hurt by others. Yet this really does hinder our ability to be our true selves and see others as they truly are. In essence, I am limited in loving the real identity of the other person, and they are limited in loving me. To love my neighbor as myself develops from the realization that the person in front of me may not be who they really are. They are projecting a character of themselves because, like me, they are afraid to be who they really are. Once we realize that, then we can begin to start seeing past the surface image and look for the real substantial person hiding underneath.

As we get closer to the 2020 presidential election, I very much want to impress upon you this understanding of the images we project. Allow me to close with one point for consideration - *“If the Divinity of Christ was hidden by His humanity, and if God’s Sacramental Grace comes to us from very natural items (bread, wine, water), then could we be missing the beauty of God in each other by not understanding the mystery of loving Him in all persons and things?”*