

“Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

The vocation of the preacher is to take the Word of God and link it to the ordinary activity of the human person. To show how the story of God is related to the story of every human being and how own individual stories are in fact part of the greater story of God.

It is not and never has been to seek approval for secular activities by using the Blessed Word of God as a proof for the validity human activities. It has never been to seek the approval or adoration of a group of people for the preacher. It is a vocation to proclaim the truth and connect that truth to the current situation of life.

Usually, I make it my practice to avoid talking about political issues, because the political is so very temporal in its nature. The politics and events of today are changed tomorrow and the heroes of today are easily replaced the next pretty face or empty suit. If you assume that I have real distain for the political it's true I do. The political man is always focused on the here and now and never on the eternal.

In these last few weeks I have received many e-mails, letters and phone calls concerning health care reform. The last e-mail put me over the edge, because the author tried to use the parable of the Good Samaritan to “Prove” that health care reform was holy and the work of the angels. The statement was made that Christians should be supporting this effort because Jesus told us to do so.

Nonsense!

Let's examine today the parable of the Good Samaritan in light of what it teaches us about our duty to our neighbors and what God is telling us about how we are to respond. I will leave you to draw any conclusions you may wish to make about the health care reform debate.

Subsidiary is a basic principle of Christian Social Justice. What this principle teaches us is that each of us has a responsibility to do what we can to address the issues presented to us. That we should not wait for others to help, but if we are able as an individual, we should address the needs we find. If we are not able to help and we need greater resources to address a particular issue, then we are to find others and enlist their aid. It is only if the local community cannot adequately address the needs that arise we are move from our local community for resources.

That seems like a very complicated set of statements, but it is a very easy to understand principle. A child falls from their bike in front of your house while you are watering the garden. Do you run into the house and call 911, your senator or do you go over to the child and help

them get up and see if they are hurt? Of course you go to the child. But what if the child appears to have a broken arm? Do you then enlist help from the neighbor across the street? You stay with the child, protect them from traffic and your neighbor calls 911.

It's all just common sense. We have the responsibility to help when and how we can. Just like the fellow walking along who sees a man who fell among robbers and stopped to help him. He helped him, he did not stop the next person who came along and tell him that he should help injured man. No, he took the initiative and helped the injured man and became his neighbor.

Jesus taught us that we should turn the other cheek if we were struck or insulted. He did not teach us that we should tell others to turn their cheeks or even to force them to turn their cheeks. No, we were created with Free Will. That is and will continue to be for us both a blessing and a stumbling block. Each of us is to make the decisions about our own behavior and actions. Certainly, civil laws have been enacted to limit the individual freedom of people to act, but generally those laws are in accord to the Natural Law or the Divine Law given to us by God.

We have civil laws that limit activities that might be dangerous to others. God taught us that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. There no conflict between the civil law and the Divine Law. The civil laws in this case reinforce the judgments we should make in exercising our free will.

We also have civil laws the limit our freedom and that are not in accord to the Divine Law or Natural Law. We are forced to pay taxes which support activities of the government that are contrary to our religious beliefs. Waging war, supporting foreign dictators, allowing unfair business competition or engaging in activities which are generally understood as illegal or immoral are examples of the conflict between what our free will tells us and what governments do.

As we apply this understanding of Free Will to government programs we should consider if the "greater good" is really served as people are forced to enroll and support programs that they might not choose to support. There are many examples of the good intentions of a group of people leading to disastrous results. Christian Morality teaches us that the ends do not justify using any means to achieve them. And certainly limiting the ability of any human being to make choices and exercise their own free will should be forbidden.

Finally, God has a simple message for us that runs like water throughout the Sacred Scriptures.

Choose Life!

*"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live,"* Deuteronomy 30:19

Jesus teaches us in the Gospel of John *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* John 10:10. And after teaching us that the will of the Father is that we have life he died for us so that we would have life, eternal life.

The Good Samaritan stops to help the man who fell among robbers because each human life is precious to God. The Samaritan knew this and acted upon that knowledge. He was the Good Samaritan because he valued human life. He understood that as the book of proverbs teaches us there is a time for everything under heaven and it is God who picks the time for us to be born and the time for us to die.

This last week the noise of resistant to proposed governmental programs has grown, as well it should. A man who is being neighbor to his brothers and sisters is not going to understand that an unborn baby is an inconvenience. He is not going to see human suffering and suggest that the age of a person, their mental capability or their wealth should decide what type of treatment they receive.

The man who is neighbor to one who fell among robbers, who bound up his wounds and carried him to the inn, is not going to decide when that person should be left by the side of the road to die. He will not care if the person has lived many years or just a few. The Good Samaritan is also a wise man. He knows what things are beyond his understanding. He knows that issues of life and death are God's decisions and are not to be in the hands of men.

The Gospel today asks us to consider which of the three were neighbor to the man who fell among robbers. The culture in which we live to day asks us the same question. Will we place our immediate needs, our wants and desires before the needs of others or will we seek first to do the Will of God and be faithful servants. Honoring God in all aspects of our lives and in the choices we make and support.

Amen