

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time [a]

September 7, 2008

Readings

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Romans 13:8-10

Matthew 18:15-20

Calendar

September 7: Grandparents Day

September 8: Feast of the Nativity of Mary

International Literacy Day [http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/literacy_day.html]

September 11: Anniversary of the terrorism events of 2001

Quotes

Among the actions and attitudes opposed to God's will two are very typical: greed and the thirst for power. Not only individuals sin in that way; so do nations and world-blocs. That is why we spoke of "structures of sin," Hidden behind all kinds of so-called economic or political considerations, are real forms of idolatry: the worship of money, ideology, class, and technology.

John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 37, (Donder's translation)

We can see that all that we have, and all that we are, is but a gift of an incredibly generous God who asks of us only that we respond to our brothers and sisters in the same gracious, generous spirit.

Archbishop Renato R. Martino, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, 1 September 2002

The solidarity which binds all people together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.

Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, 157

Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And, taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a Heaven creature or into a hellish creature -- either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is Heaven: that is, it is joy, and peace, and knowledge, and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.

C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Thoughts for your consideration

If we think of the first and third readings only in terms of individual sinfulness, we may miss part of what God is telling us. In the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, we are called not only to look at and repent of our personal sin, but also look at the world and its structures and the need for reconciliation and repentance with respect to social sin. We are called to help one another to see our sin and to move into repentance and renewal.

The prophet in the first reading and the followers whom Jesus addresses, are called to help others be aware of the sin of the world – a sin for which no one person is responsible. We all share responsibility. We are all invited to acknowledge our need for reconciliation as we face the realities of social sin -- racism in American society, extreme poverty, economic inequality, structures that allow the violation of human rights, the deterioration of our environment, the repeating practice of war and terrorism, etc. etc.

Catholic Social Teaching challenges us to move away from a privatized religion to a religion that is rooted in community and care for the common good. We are invited to see our sin as not just something between “God and me,” but also as something that involves the community – something that affects the community. Our repentance is reflected in our work to promote justice, to break down barriers, and to create reconciliation.

The words of Jesus remind us of the need for creative dialogue and conversation between individuals and groups – not condemnation and judgment. This is the spirit that is needed as we work to bridge what divides us – north and south – black and white – rich and poor – Israeli and Palestinian – Iraqi and American – Christian and Muslim – worker and manager – women and men – powerful and powerless.

Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

When have you spoken up or challenged your brothers or sisters about some ethical, moral, or social issue? What happened? How did it affect you? How did it affect them?

+++++

When have you spoken up about some ethical, moral, or social issue in the public form? What happened? How did it affect you? How did it affect others?

Actions – Links

International Literacy Day is September 8, 2008. For information about literacy issues go to http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/literacy_day.html or go to UNESCO at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=43316&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The US Census Bureau recently release its report on **United States Poverty in 2007**. You can check it out at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty07.html>

“Crazy Facts”

The International Reading Association reports that “More than 780 million of the world’s adults (nearly two-thirds of whom are women) do not know how to read or write, and between 94 and 115 million children lack access to education.”

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Lord, help us to love and respect one another.

For the poor in our nation and all the nations of the world, we pray....

For those who suffer from discrimination because of race, gender, ethnicity, or for any other reason, we pray.....

For those who cannot read and write and so are isolated from the richness of our world community, we pray.....

For all those who are trapped and afraid in places of war, violence, genocide, and terrorism, we pray....

For political prisoners and those denied basic human rights, we pray....

For those who are homeless, either in our own nation or as refugees who have no nation at all, we pray....

Prayer – Meditation

Prayer for Peace of Pope John Paul II

To you, Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray:

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.

Hear my voice, when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship.

Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

Hear my voice, and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with sharing of self, to war with peace.

O God, hear my voice, and grant unto the world your everlasting peace.