

Homily for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 22, 2018
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Jeremiah, concludes his prophetic preamble as he cries out, “The Lord is our’ Justice.” The preamble of our Constitution echoes Jeremiah, “We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity. For those unfamiliar with Jeremiah, a little background. Jeremiah wrote immediately before the great Babylonian exile. Jeremiah, you might remember, warned Israel’s leaders to trust in God and not to make treaties with the pagan nations. These treaties would demand the practice of pagan rituals, and the adoption of pagan immorality. More than this, these treaties would be a rejection of something that was at the heart of the Hebrew People. God had chosen them. God had delivered them from the Egyptians, fought their battles for them and protected them in the past. A treaty with another nation would imply that God could no longer care for his people. At the very best, the leaders would be hedging their bets. If we can’t trust our’ God to save us at least we have treaties to fall back on. At the very worst, the leaders would be expressing a breach in faith. Our’ God does not exist to save us anymore let’s try theirs. Our

modern paraphrase of this dilemma, “God only helps those who help themselves.”

Now while these leaders, these faithless shepherds, were rejecting God, they were also putting on the pious front. Externally they appeared to be religious. In all actuality they were hypocrites. Jeremiah was sick of their act. He continued his attack against them. He piled the prophetic gloom and doom on thick. But, then he did a 180 and spoke positively. That’s the section that should catch our eye. Jeremiah prophesied a day when the leaders would be wise and just, a day when people would proclaim with their lives, “The Lord is our justice.”

Jeremiah prophesied concerning the times following Jesus life, death and resurrection. The times we are a part of because Jesus is the personification of justice and wisdom. Jesus is the shepherd sung about in the psalm. He promises us verdant pasture, guides us on right paths, protects us through the dark valleys, life often presents. Jesus spreads the table of the Eucharist before us, fills the cup with his precious blood to overflowing and promises everlasting happiness in his Kingdom to those who follow His commands, who live according to His justice. Only one problem remains; There are still faithless, wicked shepherds out there in the world seeking to compromise the truth, seeking to deny even the existence of God. And we still need to choose between them and the good shepherd. We still need to choose the right shepherd. “The

Lord our Justice,” the shepherd who provides us his body and blood, who institutes his sacraments and establishes his church with Peter as its first shepherd.

Usually when we hear the term “justice” we think of court cases. We refer to justice as a decision that safeguards the rights of all people. Biblical justice is much deeper than that. Biblical justice describes a way of life that reflects the presence of God, reflects trust in the Good Shepherd. Biblical justice is based on true faith in God that results in a person conducting themselves with love towards God and neighbor in all their’ actions. Biblical justice refers to integrity. Now there’s a word that we don’t hear a lot, at least not in the public forum.

Integrity. The word integrity means to be whole, complete. A person with integrity is a person of sincerity, a person whose actions are a natural reflection of his or her interior. A person with integrity has a firm hold on the truth. He or she does not create truth. He or she respects truth knowing that truth belongs only to God. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross breaks down all the barriers between God and man, establishes peace and justice between Christ and those who follow his way, his truth his life. Through Jesus all have access in one Spirit to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus provides the banquet the peace offering of his body and blood.

The age of integrity began with Jesus Christ. It will continue with us if we choose him as our' shepherd. There is but one true Catholic, that is "universal," faith that practices the totality of the truth as laid out by Jesus Christ and which predates all other Christian denominations. All other protestant denominations suffer from founders who have rejected some portion of the whole truth and settled for something less. But, a day is coming when people will say, "The Lord is our justice, our integrity." That day is upon us from the moment of our' conception. We have in the past, and we can in the present be people who make the love of Christ a living reality in the world.

Many people in the world have tremendous needs. They need true Catholic leaders to show them the love, the compassion of Christ. They need us to be those leaders. The ladies of our parish just completed the 10th annual CRHP retreat for women. CRHP provides a means of enhancing and strengthening the relationship among the men and women of our Catholic community so that we can become better leaders better shepherds of the faith. We have around 3200 families in the parish. More than 300 women have attended this retreat and all are actively involved in parish ministry. This coming weekend is the 2nd annual CRHP retreat for men. We had 72 men attend the first year. This year we have fewer than 20 enrolled. It seems, what we have more of than we can handle is excuses as to why men cannot make it. What we

need is more shepherds, more leaders. Christ told his disciples, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” “When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.” Before we can become the good shepherd, we are called to be, we must come to know the one true faith that we practice, we must sit at the feet of the teacher. Jesus is with us. Jesus is yearning to come out of us. He is calling us to be the people we can be. We can do this because we are all made in the image and likeness of God, because we make up the body of Christ, God’s justice calls for equality and love among all people. We do justice when we go where the fabric is breaking down, where the weaker members of society are falling through. We are and profess to be, after all, people of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church. We believe that through our discipleship God helps everyone especially those who cannot help themselves.