

HOMILY for 5th SUNDAY of EASTER – Year C

This Sunday's Gospel tells us about an important Commandment & task that Jesus left behind for us Christians. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

The sales manager was complaining to a colleague about one of his salesmen. "George is so forgetful that it's a wonder he can sell anything. I asked him to pick up some sandwiches on his way back from lunch, but I'm not sure he'll even remember to come back."

Just then, the door flew open & in came George. "You'll never guess what happened!" he shouted. "At lunch, I met Fred Brown, the President of a Fortune 500 company. He hadn't bought anything from us in 10 years. Well, we got to talking, & he gave me an order worth 15 million dollars!"

"See?" said the sales manager. "I told you he'd forget the sandwiches."

Like that salesman in the cute story who forgot his current task, we are reminded in this Sunday's Gospel what we Christians must do & practice every day, namely, living a life of love. Here is how Jesus commanded us Christians to do in today's Gospel, "...My children, I am not to be with you much longer. I give you a new Commandment: love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love for each other. This is how all will know for my disciples; your love for one another." Jesus clearly wanted to distinguish us Christians from other religions & the rest of the world by our love for one another. Jesus evidently knew about the Jewish teaching of "an eye for an eye & a tooth for a tooth" & wanted to separate the Christian teaching of love from it. Otherwise, Christians are not different from the public & have nothing to brag about.

As you can see, Jesus was revolutionary & visionary in His teaching of a new religion & setting Christianity apart from Jewish faith & other religions. That is why He taught His disciples two important Commandments of love: Love God with all their being & love their neighbors as themselves. This new teaching is certainly difficult for us Christians to practice daily. Yet, real Christians have been able to muster up all their energy & courage to live up to Jesus' Commandments & expectation. Unfortunately, recently one of our politicians who claims to be Catholic has misinterpreted Jesus' teaching of love & told the public to love their families first, & then share any love left with their neighbors & the world. That is absolutely a distortion & wrongful interpretation of Jesus' teaching on loving one's neighbors. Jesus never told us to love our families first, then our friends, & lastly strangers in that order. He simply demanded us to love our neighbors & everyone around us as much as we love ourselves. In fact, He challenged the Jewish narrow concept of love for neighbors by telling the public the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In the parable, we were told that a poor Jewish man fell victim to a robbery & were beaten & left for death on the side of the road. A Levi & a religious priest who were both Jewish came upon that tragic site & simply walked by on the opposite side. A Samaritan saw that Jewish victim, bandaged him up, & took him to the nearby inn. That kind stranger even spent his own money for the healing & recovery of the poor Jewish victim. By sharing that parable, Jesus wanted to redefine the narrow concept of neighbor that the Jewish public held back then. That is, the Jews did not consider someone a neighbor unless that person is Jewish himself/herself. That is why the Jews would not have anything to do with the Samaritans, the

Canaanites, or other ethnic groups to this day. Hence, we have seen the hostile treatment of the Palestinians by the Israelites right now.

When politicians pretend to be Christian/Catholic & misinterpret Jesus' revolutionary Commandment of loving one's neighbors to justify their selfish & anti-Christian-values political movement like that, they create a heresy & a big threat to the Christian/Catholic community. They are fake prophets or simply wolves in shepherd clothing that Jesus warned us about in the Gospels. They have the ulterior motives & pretend to cover themselves with the Christian/Catholic mantle to achieve political gain. They do not care about the wellbeing of the Christian/Catholic community or Jesus' mission of salvation for the whole world. All they care about is their political gain & exclusive group of the Caucasian elites.

In contrary to that misguided understanding & wrongful interpretation of Christian/Catholic beliefs, this Sunday's First Reading gives us the true vision of the Christian/Catholic Church as following: "After Paul & Barnabas had proclaimed the good news in Derbe & made numerous disciples, ...They gave their disciples reassurances & encouraged them to persevere in the faith with this instruction: 'We must undergo many trials if we are to enter the Kingdom of God.' ...They called the Congregation together & related all that God had helped them accomplish, & how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" We & all the Christian/Catholic politicians should be thankful to Jesus & the apostles who had to endure many trials to open up the Church & welcome Gentiles like us. We ought to follow that same tradition & have the similar welcoming & open-minded spirit toward strangers & outsiders as our Lord & the early Church had done for us.

In case we have not seen that inclusive & universal vision of our Lord & the early Church for the salvation of the whole world yet, this Sunday's Second Reading shares with us the following revelation: "I, John, saw new Heavens & a new earth. The former heavens & the former earth had passed away, & the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: 'This is God's dwelling among people. He shall dwell with them, & they shall be His people... He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, & there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away.'" So, John is able to share with us the vision of a new world that our Lord would create for us & bring to our human family. Our Lord would not just wipe the tears of the rich & the Caucasian & then let the poor & the people of color cry out in pain. For our Lord would not favor & take care of only a certain group of people like our crooked & biased politicians have done to our world. For our Lord desires to comfort & save the whole world: people of every race & language.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus' Commandment for us Christians/Catholics is clear & simple, namely, love one another as we love ourselves. He wants to use the love for ourselves as the standard & motivation for us to love everyone around us. When we are able to do that, we will help advance Jesus' vision of universal salvation & make it come true right here in this life.