



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father and maker of all, you adorn all creation with splendor and beauty, and fashion human lives in your image and likeness. Awaken in every heart reverence for the work of your hands, and renew among your people a readiness to nurture and sustain your precious gift of life. Amen

Commentary

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18:25-28

Knowing the Lord's way and living it are two separate things. Sometimes we might find it easier to justify our way, our beliefs and morals, to match our actions rather than to follow God's way.

God said, "Both ways lie before you, life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you may live!" The Church upholds and defends the dignity and sacredness of life from conception to natural death for all persons.

As baptized disciples of Christ and members of His body, we are called to uphold and defend the life of every person regardless of nationality, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, criminal conviction, etc.

Abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment are never acceptable or justifiable to take a human life.

Question

• Is there a Church teaching or doctrine regarding life that you don't agree with or found too challenging to follow? If so, what did you decide to do?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

What makes a saint? One of my favorite definitions comes from Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian, who famously wrote: "To be a saint is to will the one thing." And, that one thing is to know God. Similarly, St. Paul calls us to be of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, (willing the) one thing; to have in us the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus.

To have the same attitude of Christ, we need to know Him. Jesus described Himself as meek and humble of heart. He said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, your mind, and your soul; and to love your neighbor as yourself. Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian, wrote that the

beatitudes "offer us a self-portrait of Jesus. Jesus is the Blessed One. And the face of the Blessed One shows poverty, gentleness, grief, hunger, and thirst for uprightness, mercy, purity of heart, a desire to make peace, and the signs of persecution."

Question

- How would you describe yourself to another person who has never met you before?
- How would you describe Jesus to another person who has never heard of Him before?
- What do you need to change in yourself to have the same attitude of Christ?

This series in our
Christ in Our Neighborhood program
focuses on celebrating life in all its forms.

Information: dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

I have two sons. Both are great kids (now in their thirties) and both at times have either said yes and then didn't do what I asked them to do, or said no and later did what was asked of them. I have also done both when things were asked of me.

It seems to be human nature to sometimes feel pulled by other priorities or resistant to what is being asked of us. But Jesus reminds us that only those who hear and do the will of God will enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus summed up the commands of God as: Love God with all your heart, mind and soul; and love your neighbor as yourself.

Can we profess that we believe and follow Christ if we then hate our neighbor and despise our enemy?

If we say we love our neighbor and enemies, then our actions should match our words, especially in the defense of the dignity and sanctity of life for all people including the unborn, the poor, the elderly, the ill, the disabled, the refugee, and the imprisoned. If we see the face of Jesus in all people, how can we then leave Him hungry, alone and cold?

Question

- Was there a time when you failed to speak up or take action to uphold the sacredness and dignity life because you were afraid?
- How can we improve how we see the face of Christ in all persons, especially in the outcasts and most vulnerable of society?

This Week's Task

- Think of one action that you can take this week in support of the dignity and sacredness of life and then do it for your love of God and your love for that person.

Group Prayer

The leader invites the group to pray the following words together.

Lord Jesus, help us to realize the sacredness of human life and to respect it from the moment of conception until the last moment at death. Give us courage to speak with truth and love and with conviction in defense of life. Help us to extend the gentle hand of mercy and forgiveness to those who do not reverence your gift of life. To all, grant pardon for the times we have failed to be grateful for your precious gift of life or to respect it in others. Amen.

Psalm

The leader will guide the group in praying Psalm 25 (from the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Psalm Response: Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.
The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
in your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus, he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Conclude with an Our Father