



Homily for 1/27/2019

3rd Sunday Ordinary Time, Year C

Rev. J. David Carter, JCL

The Answer to Life's Question

The question that most human beings ask themselves at one point or another is “Who am I?” It is the existential question that leads to the formation of one’s life philosophy, one’s answer to the meaning of life.

So I ask you, “Who are you?” If you want an honest answer, look at what or who you love. There is the old adage, “Show me what you spend your money on and what you spend your time doing, and I will show you what you love.” The wise of this world and the foolish both speak to us a lesson about what we ‘ought’ to love. The foolish squander their time and their money on selfishness and merely carnal desire. They end up empty, lonely and despairing because they love only themselves or because they have loved things that cannot love them back. The wise, however, live for others and know the power of self-sacrifice; At times, they even seem to the foolish to even *love* their suffering! But the fruit of self-sacrifice is evident because they end up full, hopeful and loved. They have discovered that man has a transcendent nature that is made for more than just himself. Wisdom be attentive.

In fact, man’s soul longs for something this world cannot fulfill. The more we try to fit the square peg of earthly delights into the round hole of divine desire we will continue to be frustrated. St. Augustine famously prayed: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

To acknowledge this is freedom, but it is also an acknowledgement that we are broken, that we don’t always love what we ought to love, and rather love lesser things. This is what was revealed as ‘idolatry’ in the Old Covenant. We place other things before God: power, pleasure, or wealth. Our desires are disordered. Our hopes misplaced. Our mind is darkened to the Truth and our will is weakened to the Good. We are broken. This is what we Christians call “Original Sin” and what G.K. Chesterton calls “the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved.” It is also the beginning of repentance if we let it be.

Until we get to this point of realizing we are broken, we will always be beating our heads against the wall, praying to idols that cannot save. Idols that have ears but cannot hear, and eyes that cannot see. But when we humbly submit and repent, we open our souls to something new.

We realize something has been missing and we are ready for the repair. This is where the Christian recognizes that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life – the repairman that we have been longing for: Our Savior.

In the dramatic scene presented in Today’s Gospel we hear about Jesus standing up in the synagogue of his own people and reading the messianic prophesy of Isaiah and then declaring that audacious statement, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,” thus declaring Himself to be the long-awaited Messiah.

But Jesus Christ is much more than just the fulfillment of Israel’s hope. In Jesus Christ, the whole of humanity’s hope is fulfilled. We now have an answer to life’s questions. “Who am I?": “I am God’s beloved one, for whom His son died - and rose - and called me to himself.”

Who are you? St. Paul implies, in the second reading, that you are part of something bigger than yourself, even here and now. If you are baptized, you have been made a member of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. You are here because the body needs the head. You need Jesus. But you are here also because the head needs the body. He has called us out to be his own. The name ‘Church’ in Greek means “those who are called out”. You need Jesus and Jesus calls you!



Who are we, then? This is the assembly of the broken who come to give thanks for having been restored. We are the ones who hear the Good News and rejoice. What is that good news? It is that we are poor, captive and blind, but he is here to save us.

Jesus says that that he brings Glad tidings to the Poor. The Church's commitment to the poor of this world comes from a solidarity with the poor. You may say, "But we have wealthy people as well as poor people in the body of Christ." However, we are not talking about material wealth or poverty. Rather, spiritual poverty is the greater problem for humanity. We are one with the materially poor of this world because we recognize ourselves in those who cannot do for themselves, because of our own spiritual poverty. We cannot save ourselves from the poverty of our sins. But in Jesus Christ, who becomes our ransom from sin, we have become rich in Him. We, in turn, are generous with what we have been given and imitate his gracious love.

Jesus proclaims Liberty to captives. We sympathize with those who are held captive in this world, because we ourselves have known the bondage of sin. We have been set free from the captivity of the passions and the flesh by believing in the redeeming power of the cross. Suffering is no longer an obstacle that keeps us bound to earthly pleasures that ensnares the flesh. We are not afraid of the pain that comes from dying to self and giving to others. We believe in the Resurrection!

Jesus says he brings Recovery of sight to the blind. I was blind, but now I see. We are not talking about a physical disability, but a spiritual blindness. Blindness leads to groping in the darkness. The Church rejoices in the light of the revelation that we are restless until we rest in God. We are made for union with Him, and anything less is insufficient. By Grace, our mind is enlightened and our will strengthened, and we walk in the light of this revelation.

Who am I? I am poor, captive and blind, I am broken. I cannot do it on my own. But I repent. I submit that you are God and I am not; and humbly admitting this before God, he calls me to be His beloved. This is fulfilled in our midst at this altar.

May Jesus Christ be praised!