

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 5 & 6, 2019

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Christ's Seamless Garment

I came across a wonderful quote by Maya Angelou:

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

Our readings today are all about thriving in humility, in faith, and in love. Habakkuk was struggling. “How long will I cry “oppression!” in your ear and you do not save?” And God replied “Those whose hearts are corrupt will faint with exhaustion, while those who steadfastly uphold justice will live.” To live is to have hope and a purpose in working for justice.

In the Gospel, the apostles ask Jesus to “increase our faith.” Jesus tells them your faith is sufficient. You just need a little seed of faith and you can move mountains. Faith directs us towards a life as the humble servant. To serve is our mission.

Sounds a lot like St Francis.

Yesterday we celebrated the Feast of St Francis. Most people recognize Francis as the statue in the garden surrounded by animals. He did love animals, but it goes much further than that. Franciscan view of creation is based on the Shema. “Hear O Israel, there is one God and God alone. Love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” When Francis loved God fully, creation became alive. Francis revered creatures out of a deep holy reverence for the Creator. Francis revered creation out of Reverence for God.

To highlight the Respect for Life Month that begins this weekend, let's go a bit deeper with Franciscan view of creation. When we love God with all our heart, soul and mind, we reverence or respect all that God created and continues to create. And when we love our neighbor as ourselves we want to thrive and we want our neighbors to thrive as well. We respect each person who God created them to be. We can disagree with them but name calling and categorizing gets us nowhere which is running rampant in our country today.

This view is still incomplete. It is focusing on one thread in a seamless garment. Jesus was wearing the seamless garment at his crucifixion. The Roman Soldiers didn't want to cut it or it would unravel and ruin it. So they cast lots for the garment so it would remain whole and intact. Each strand of the garment matters to the whole piece. Each creature matters to the whole of creation. What stresses 1 strand stresses the whole. When one person is disrespected, then it tends only to lead to more disrespecting then before you know it the seamless garment looks like it was trampled on underfoot.

Last week, Greta Thunberg, the 16 year old from Sweden, visited the USA and she taught us to look at the bigger picture, the seamless garment and the threat to its unraveling. Her message about Climate Change is informed, strong and might I say “Ouch”? Climate dictates weather patterns through the circulation of energy in our atmosphere, the more energy in our atmosphere the more energy in our storms. Not addressing the warming of the climate has ramifications today and in the future and puts people’s livelihoods in jeopardy. It is especially imperative for island nations. This is the reason why Pope Francis wrote the Encyclical Laudato Si: Care for our Common Home basing it on St Francis’ view of Creation.

A great example of the seamless garment are the hosts consecrated at Mass. It is made of wheat and water. But it isn’t that simple. Farmers, farm equipment, seed companies, weather patterns, flour mills, bakeries, shipping companies all play a role in bringing it to our church. Other outside influences are the Department of Agriculture’s Farm Bill, the national and international Wheat Trade, Clean Water Act, and land use policies. All of these are brought to the alter contained in a little round host, then consecrated into the body and blood of Jesus where Jesus holds the good and the bad, the just and the unjust and blesses it all.

We are living in at a pivotal time in history. The seamless garment is in jeopardy of unraveling. We can either ignore it and it will get worse, or like Habakkuk we can continue to stand for the right for all or our neighbors to thrive. I pray that each of you fan into flame your God given gifts of power, love and self-discipline and use them well with a little passion, compassion, humor and style.

Amen!