

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YRC

July 11, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: DEUTERONOMY 30:10-14

“For this law which I command which I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you.”

PSALM 69

Turn to the Lord in your need and you will live.

2ND READING: COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation.

GOSPEL: LUKE 10:25-37

..a lawyer stood up to pose this problem to Jesus: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?”

ALTERNATIVE OPENING PRAYER: May your love make us who you call us to be.

+++++

This would never happen in Gainesville; but I was reading that a pastor woke up one morning and found a dead donkey on the front lawn of the church. He didn't have the slightest idea how the dead donkey got there; but he knew he had to get rid of the carcass. So, he called the Sanitation department, but they couldn't remove a dead donkey. He called the health department, but they couldn't remove a dead donkey either. And it went on, the priest worked his way thru all the city and county agencies and bureaucracies but no one could help get rid of the dead donkey. Finally, in desperation, he called the mayor. The Mayor thought it was quite funny and said, “Father, I am sorry I can't help with your problem, isn't it your job to bury the dead?” Well, the pastor didn't think it was funny at all and exasperated, he snapped back at the Mayor: “Yes, it is my job to bury the dead, but I thought I'd better notify the next of kin.”

The next of kin are all around us!! In the days of today's Gospel, Jesus story had a huge impact. Jews hated Samaritans and Samaritans hated Jews. It was not unlike the Jews and the Palestinians today. There's a song, a show stopper actually, in the movie and play South Pacific. It says: You have to be taught how to hate! Early training, reinforced through our families, our schools, our places of worship, our media condition us.

A simple consideration can go a long way toward understanding the way our early training exerts such conditioning on our lives. Babies are born with the capacity to speak any language. Our throat, our vocal chords, our tongue, our lips, and our whole mouth are all shaped in such a way by the learning of our mother tongue that for the rest of our lives we can emit with ease only the sounds of our homeland while we find it almost impossible to reproduce the strange utterances of people from other regions. My throat refuses to utter new sounds and my mind refuses to accept new points of view. But I actually can learn by a determination and discipline to speak another language for myself. And I can move beyond the conditioning of my upbringing and grow to love my neighbor in this shrinking world.

People of all religions have always paid lip service to God. But Jesus is the image of the invisible God and he tells us we must love our neighbor as ourselves. The people hated the Romans but Jesus went to the centurion's house and healed his daughter. The people hated Matthew, a tax collector for the Romans, but Jesus called him to be his companion and evangelist. The people hated Samaritans and didn't value women's opinions, but Jesus had a lively conversation with one Samaritan who had been married five times and was a scandal even to her own people. Then her entire village followed this woman to Jesus. Shall I go on? I think we get the idea.

There's a lot more going on here than being kind to someone in trouble. The question is: are we as enslaved to hatred and prejudice as I am to my Philadelphia accent? Are we so bound to fashion that we conform our values to whatever the crowd is pushing? Have we been trained to hate Samaritans by a different label? How are we training our children? It takes a strong conscious effort to achieve a certain proficiency in a second language and it certainly takes a strong effort to achieve a certain degree of independence and neutrality in forming our opinions. But less effort is

likely to lead us to kinship with stubborn donkeys. That's not for us; the good news is that our kin is Jesus Christ!