

Scripture for June 1, 2008

9th Sunday in regular time

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

21st century commandments

In our first reading today from the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses says to the people:

“I set before you here, this day, a blessing and a curse; a blessing for obeying the commandments of the Lord, your God...a curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord, your God.”

For the people of that time, blessings took the form of many offspring, good crops and large numbers of animals, security and peace. Curses took the form of childlessness, poor crops and diseased animals, drought and conquest by enemies.

The “Ten Commandments” date perhaps to twelve centuries before the Christian era. They have a revered place in our tradition and always will have that place.



A question arises: Can we in the twenty-first century of the Christian era write some new commandments? Using our religious imaginations and coming out of our experience of living on this Planet, can we with confidence compose some new commandments that

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are rooted in the old but speak strongly of the Divine will for us in these modern times?

Some are attempting this and I invite you to do the same. A philosopher and futurist by the name of Ervin Laszlo has done so. I want to share with you the first five of his ten commandments for the twenty-first century:

- 1. Live in ways that enable other people to also live - satisfying your needs without detracting from the chances of others to satisfy theirs.**
- 2. Live in ways that respect the right to life and to**
- 3. Live in ways that safeguard the intrinsic right to life and to an environment supportive of life of all the things that live and grow on Earth.**
- 4. Pursue happiness, freedom, and personal fulfillment in harmony with the integrity of nature and with consideration for the similar pursuits of others.**
- 5. Require that your government relates to other nations and peoples peacefully and in a spirit of cooperation, recognizing the legitimate aspirations for a better life and a healthy environment of all the people in the human family.**

To a significant extent Earth's human community is not obeying twenty-first century commandments such as these. The result is that we are afflicted with a curse... the curse of a withering Earth.

Yes, Earth is withering! Temperatures are rising, soils are eroding, forests are shrinking, rivers are running dry, fisheries are collapsing, polar ice caps are melting, plant and animal species are going extinct, cancers are increasing, children of all species are dying, and the gap between the human rich and poor is widening.

If we were to obey these commandments we would surely be gifted with many blessings... the blessing of a vibrant DNA passed on to future human generations, the blessing of an abundance of non-toxic air to breathe, pure water to drink, rich soil in which to grow our food, and the blessing of peace among nations, peoples, and religions.

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