

Scripture for October 26, 2008

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

All-Inclusive Divine Love

Most Christians believe that God is a loving God. There is, however, much disagreement over the width, length, height, and depth of the Divine love. For many this love is limited and conditional, offered to some and not to others. Many believe that the Divine love is reserved for the elect. Many believe that the Divine love is bestowed only upon those who are obedient to God's law and that the love is basically a reward for good and orthodox behavior.

In our Gospel reading today (Matthew 22:34-40) Jesus is presented to us as summing-up the love command as found in his religious tradition. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with such love commands and so there is nothing new in Jesus' summation. What is new is the invitation to love as he loves and to practice the kind of love that he models and teaches. It is a love offered to the outcasts, the sinners, and the unloved. It is a love for both the neighbor and the enemy...this kind of all-inclusive love is what is radically new.

Jesus makes it clear that God's love is not limited and conditional and exclusive, not offered to some and denied to others, not reserved for the elect or for those who obey the Law.

Jesus teaches that God's love is not just a reward for living morally. God is not like the parent who says to the child: If you behave Santa will bring you gifts. The gift of Divine love is not a reward for good behavior but an absolute and total commitment, a commitment that is made everywhere to all...regardless... unconditionally...inclusively.



Salvation is not so much about what happens to us after we die but what is happening to us now in the present moment as we grow in our realization that God loves us and not only us but every other person and not only every other person but everything in the Universe from the smallest life-forms to the largest of galaxies. The Divine love extends to all that participate in the sacred Mystery of existence.

The Well

A Center for our

Sacred Unity with God,

Earth, and One

Another.

1515 W. Ogden Ave.

LaGrange Park, IL 60526

www.csjthewell.org

thewell@csjlagrange.org

*A Center for our
Sacred Unity with
God,
Earth, and One
Another.*

God looks upon everyone and everything that exists and says: all of this is good...all of this is lovable...I love it all.

This inclusive loving is the Divine's primary activity within the Universe. Jesus proclaims the Good News of this Divine activity as he breaks down the barriers he encounters and as he refuses to limit God's favor to a chosen few.

As long as we look upon the Divine love as limited to some and not poured out upon all, we religious people are part of the problem rather than the solution to many of the ills afflicting our planet and our world. With this limited view of Divine love, religious people can easily justify any actions against those whom they perceive to be outside God's loving embrace...like a thousand years of Crusades, a hundred years of slave trade, the marching of Jewish people into furnaces, and in our 21st century the on-going diminishment and destruction of Earth's life-systems.

1515 W. Ogden Ave.
LaGrange Park, IL 60526
www.csjthewell.org
thewell@csjlagrange.org

On the other hand, we religious people can be part of the solution to the many ills afflicting Earth and its human community. We can transform our planet and our world as we practice in our finite way the kind of love that God pours out in God's infinite way.

Putting limits on the Divine love comes easy to us. We easily say: God doesn't love the bad people as much as God loves the good people or God loves us humans but does not love the air, water, soil, fish and birds. We are reminded however, that God's ways are not our ways. We are invited to embrace a larger image of God.

We need a God whose love is at least as expansive as our 13.7 billion year old universe with its billions of galaxies. We need a God whose love is at least this large and more...that is, a God who loves beyond limits.

Sisters and Brothers, let us be busy practicing in our small way the kind of limitless and inclusive love that God pours out in God's cosmic way!