



October 4, 2009 The Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the human to be alone.’” Genesis 2:18

Dear Friends;

Our word “universe” comes from Latin words that literally translated means “one over all.” What that means is that everything that exists is essentially of the same fabric. The ancient insight is reflected in recent scientific discoveries that confirm that the material that makes up everything in the universe (including you and I) are the result of the same cosmic event—the “Big Bang.”

What that means is that we are all interrelated. Everyone and everything has its place in the universe. And everything is dependent on something else for existence. This is also true of human beings.

His Holiness Tenzin Gyatsu, the Dalai Lama of Tibet reflected this understanding when he wrote, “We humans are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others’ actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment of our lives when we do not benefit from others’ activities. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others.”

Today’s Scriptures remind us also that we are inherently social beings. There is no idea of “rugged individualism” in the Old or New Testaments. That would be wholly un-Jewish. Judaism as in all Mediterranean cultures defines individuals by their relationship to the community. You cannot know yourself by yourself apart from others. You can only come to know yourself through the loving eyes of others—family, friends, and community. You are known by others by the relationships that you keep. This would certainly be the understanding of Jesus.

To attempt to define oneself apart from others in this context is destructive and would be labeled as sin. Sin is that which tears us apart one from another. It sets us into categories of powerful and the powerless, the haves and have-nots, the chosen and the undeserving. It does violence to individuals, families, communities, nations and the cosmos.

Jesus’ teaching on divorce needs to be seen in this communal context. Divorce in his society was something only the men could do. Women were powerless it was the privilege of men. Women who were divorced had no ability to protest, and if their families did not take them back they (and their children) would be left destitute. Divorce was a great injustice, especially where women did not enjoy equality with men and had no way to have a means of support. It ripped the fabric of human community apart. What Jesus’ whole ministry is about is restoring the sense of relationship that we should have.

What does this mean for our culture? We live in a society where we think we are independent of everyone else. We often do not feel responsible for the effects of our actions on others. The recent mortgage fiasco shows how the actions of those who do not feel responsible for their behavior affects everyone. We are our brothers’ keepers. We need to move away from extreme forms of individualism that prevents us from seeing our relationship and responsibility to others. We are made for each other.

This responsibility extends not just to people but all creation. Today we also celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi—who even preached the Gospel to animals. He recognized our interconnectedness. In his honor today we will bless all of our animals and give thanks to God for the companionship they bring us. They remind us that we are all one.

To change the subject, in a week **I will be leaving for seven weeks in Bolivia. I will be studying Spanish at the Maryknoll Society (Missionary Order) Language Institute in Cochabamba.** While I am away, my uncle, **Rev Msgr Jerome Schmit (Fr. Jerry) will be presiding at liturgy and the sacraments.** Pastoral day-to-day operations and decisions will be handles by the staff—Pastoral Associate Lisa Promani; Faith Formation Director, Sr Barbara Nixon SNJM; Business and Facilities Director, Tony Hicks.

Peace,

Fr. Ron