



Come and See!

July 1, 2018

The Word...

Brothers and sisters: As you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also...
Not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality.
As it is written: *Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.*
(from 2 Cor 8:7, 9, 13-15)

Pondering the Word...

A few weeks ago, the little historic town near where I live was hit with a second devastating flood in as many years. My neighborhood did not suffer much damage, and my parish--always generous--took up a collection to help those who had lost everything. Then, out of the blue, we received a very generous donation from a parish in New Jersey. They had been helped by other parishes during the devastation of Superstorm Sandy several years ago, so they decided to "pay it forward" and support our efforts. What a wonderful, gracious act!

This is what Paul is addressing to the Corinthians in today's second reading. The community in Jerusalem is suffering from famine, and Paul asks the Corinthians to share their abundance--and he throws in a little peer pressure about the generous Macedonians as well--Paul knew all about fundraising techniques!

Pope Francis is encouraging us to look differently at the highly proprietary way in which we in capitalistic societies view resources and possessions. He calls us to look beyond our own community and country, to the needs of all God's children, and of the world itself, to look for equality and fairness in allocating resources.

The prospect of this seems overwhelming. What can one person, one family, even one community do to make a change that matters? Take to heart the words of anthropologist Margaret Mead: "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*"

Living the Word...

There have been articles recently on the sad phenomenon that people are feeling more and more disempowered to affect change. As Christians, it is so important we remember one of the most overlooked parts of Jesus' ministry--his ministry of empowerment. Yes, he is God, and yes, he cured the sick and lame, but he also healed people of their powerlessness by reminding them they could "go in peace for their faith had healed them." Jesus empowers us with faith to do "even greater things" than he did (Jn 14:12).

So make changes in your own home to hoard less of the world's resources. Donate your excess food and clothes. Use less water. Cut way down on the use of plastics. Make sure people in your community get a fair share of the resources open to the community. Sponsor a child at camp or a family at the local YMCA. Lobby local, state, and national politicians for an equitable distribution of goods and services. Don't throw up your hands in disgust or complacency. Go change the world!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jul 2: *“Remember this, you who never think of God. Why do you recite my statutes, and profess my covenant with your mouth, though you hate discipline and cast my words behind you?”* (Ps 50)

While none of the prophetic books are cheery, the Book of Amos, featured this week, is one of the least so. The author attacks Israel’s hypocrisy, and today’s psalm passage is in keeping with Amos’ warnings. It’s a “zinger” to wake us up. There are no big feasts for a while, no times of preparation to keep us focused on God. We may need help acting upon God’s statutes, not just occasionally reciting them. As you rise each day, make a conscious decision to love. Ask the Spirit to keep you aware and in tune with God’s presence all around you.

Jul 3: *“In (Christ Jesus) you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”* (Eph 2:19-22)

Note Paul’s use of the present tense: you “are being” built into a dwelling place for the Spirit...not you have been or you will be...you are, right now. Yes, of course the Spirit has already taken up residence in us through the virtue of our baptism, but every day, we are being built into a productive place from which the Spirit can venture out through us. We are not complete, and there will be many a time that what we’ve started building may need to be torn down a bit for the structure to remain true. Don’t lament if you’ve let the dwelling fall into disrepair or you think you don’t have the right tools to build. Allow the Spirit do the structural work from the inside and your dwelling will emerge strong and secure and ready to house the world!

Jul 4: *“Hate evil and love good, and let justice prevail at the gate...”* (Am 5:14-15, 21-24)

When I read this, I think of the refugees and asylum seekers trying to make their way to a safe place to raise their kids. I heard in a presentation that the only reason parents risk taking their children out on rickety boats to cross the Mediterranean is if the water is safer than the land. The same holds true for parents seeking to escape poverty and gang violence. This is a complex issue that demands civil resolution. The prophet Amos calls for justice at the gate: Yes, some seeking to enter our countries are set on doing evil, and we must weed out such individuals. But must we throw out *all* the wheat because of the presence of some weeds? Pray today for the leaders of nations, that they will work together to find just and fair solutions to this terrible situation. Do your part by being a welcoming presence to those in your community who might be living in fear.

Jul 5: *“I was no prophet...I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD said, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.”* (Am 7:12-15)

We’re familiar with shepherds being called to guide God’s people, but WHAT in the world is “a dresser of sycamores?” This tree is not the same one we know of in North America; the Egyptian sycamore produces figs. For the fruit to be edible it must be cut open while it’s young or it becomes bitter. Amos’ “side gig” is to tend these trees so he and his neighbors have good fruit to eat. Amos is called by God to guide the people, but as a prophet, he’s called at times to cut open their hearts to hear God’s word. There are prophets among us today. Are we open to their words and wisdom? Or are we just too tired and bitter?

Jul 6: *“We will buy the lowly man for silver, and the poor man for a pair of sandals; even the refuse of the wheat we will sell!”* (Am 8:4-6, 9-12)

We are appalled at the stories about scam artists—criminals really—taking advantage of the young, the old, and the vulnerable. Given the number of scam calls I receive, it’s scary to imagine how many people they entrap in their webs. So what do I do about it? I usually just block the number and move on, but how will that help the next person they dial or email? These charlatans need to be exposed for what they are. Yes, the Lord will punish them for their deeds, but I need take the time to be a responsible citizen and Christian and report them to authorities; there are several legitimate websites that allow me to do that. Do you have an elderly or young neighbor or family member? Offer to help them discern a legitimate offer from a scam. Be a prophet like Amos. Don’t be afraid to call out those who use others for their own profit.

Jul 7: *“People do not put new wine into old wineskins.”* (Mt 9: 14-17)

As difficult as it may be, there are times when we need to move forward and abandon the old. We have changed, grown, and who we are no longer fits in what was. Pray for the strength to discern when God is calling you to let go.