

26th Sunday of the Year (A)

October 1, 2017

**Ezekiel 18:25-28
Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Philippians 2:1-11
Matthew 21:29-32**

In my group work with the veterans, I touch on many topics one of which is the soul. The question that opens the topic is “Can the soul recover from war?” No one denies that the soul is indeed touched by war and violence, by death and destruction. Yet, when I ask more specifically, “What is the soul?” The responses are pretty varied. Often times one will say that the soul does not exist, it is just something we imagine or make up. Others are quick to say that the soul does exist and is that part of us that lives on even when the body stops living. I am not teaching philosophy and theology when I work with the veterans. My objective is to help these veterans look at their experience of war and combat and gain an understanding and an acceptance of themselves.

We come here each Sunday and we hear God’s sacred word that we might come to know God, that we might come to know our own selves and our fellow human beings around this world. We are here because we are convinced these lessons help us know where we are and where we are headed. Perhaps more than anything the lessons remind us that our existence in this world is complex. We each have a body that enables us to exist in this world. These bodies allow us to move about, to reach out and to communicate with each other. We have our minds which are pretty extraordinary, helping us understand things, to use our memories and insight to project meaning into events, to figure things out and make plans. And then, we have the mysterious element called the soul, the heart of who we are! The challenge for each of us as believers is to be in touch with the soul. We are told the soul is beautiful, valuable, and eternal!

The body and the mind each have their needs, that is, to be cared for, to be nurtured, and to be challenged. We grow through the interaction of our ideas and life experiences, through our mistakes and poor choices. We have to be careful to engage the soul along with the activities of the body and the mind in order to arrive at the truth. With the soul God reveals to each one of us who we really are. Jesus is indeed the revelation of who and what we are called to be.

The lesson from Ezekiel and our gospel passage pretty much reflects how very human we are at times as we grumble against God. Or, in our self-centeredness, we say yes but have no intention of following through or keeping our word. The beauty of these lessons is that we can change our minds, and thus, change the heart. We can learn from our mistakes, we can repent, we can grow. Living from the heart, is to be in touch with the soul and to be more genuinely the human person God intended us to be.

The lesson to the Philippians is indeed a marvelous picture of Jesus and the soul. Paul urges the people to be an obedient community of supportive and compassionate love, not selfishly centered on individual ambition or rivalry, but on the needs of others. It is only when one is in touch with the soul that one will even begin to “regard others as more important.” When in touch with the soul, it is possible to move closer and closer to the mind and attitude of Christ Jesus. Paul wants each of us to learn from Jesus what we are here for...that is, to take care of people. Jesus asks us to recognize that every single human being is beautiful, valuable, and eternal. Paul says, “Look to Christ. He is the model. He is the one who comes and puts us in touch with what is most genuine in us.”

We move to the altar to celebrate Eucharist and to we come forward to receive the gift of Christ Jesus. May our souls be so touched, that our minds and bodies will carry the attitude of Christ into this new week.