

Homily.15OrdC.7.10.22
Deacon Tim Sullivan
Saint Bernard Church

THE GOOD SAMARITAN AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS

This evening, I'd like to explain the connection between the story of the good Samaritan in tonight's Gospel and the blood of Jesus.

Saint Paul writes in tonight's second reading from the Letter to the Colossians that "in Jesus all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross."

How does the blood of the cross of Jesus bring peace? And what does that have to do with each of us? That's what I want to explain.

We'll start with the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis.

You know the story. Cain and Abel are brothers. Cain says to Abel, "Let's go out in the field." So they go out, and Cain attacks Abel and kills him. Able has no idea why.

So God goes looking for Cain. He finds him and asks Cain where his brother is. We're familiar with Cain's response. He says to God: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

We're less familiar with God's answer to Cain's question. God says to Cain: "What have you done! Listen: your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil!"

Shakespeare was so moved by the image of Abel's blood crying out from the ground that he used variations of it in many of his tragedies. But what does it mean?

When Abel turned to see Cain coming at him with a weapon to kill him, he was totally bewildered. He would have been thinking, "Cain, what have I done to you? I love you. Why do you want to hurt me?"

The cry of Abel's blood from the soil is a shrill cry, filled with anguish, for understanding, for an explanation, for appeasement, for justice.

But in a deeper sense, Abel's blood crying from the ground represents not just Abel's pain. It's the cry of all the oppressed people in the world, the starving, the abused, the neglected, the poor, the aborted babies. If you could hear all of these people in the world right now crying out with pain, immersed in misery, that's also the cry of Abel's blood.

One of the fundamental questions raised for every one of us tonight is "Do we hear the cry of Abel's blood in the world today?" If not, why don't we hear it? And if we do hear it, how are we responding?

God hears the cry, and we know that He is going to respond to the cry of Abel's blood by asking His son to give His blood to make up for all the inhumanity, all the sin, in the world. In the Letter to the Hebrews of the New Testament, Chapter 12, it refers to Jesus as "the mediator of a new covenant and His sprinkled blood that cries out more powerfully than the blood of Abel."

Here is where you and I come in.

Saint Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?"

Then in Chapter 12, in speaking of the members of the Body of Christ, Saint Paul says: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it."

So going back to the question I asked earlier, "How does the blood of the cross bring peace?" now we have our answer.

In the Eucharist, we receive the body and the blood of Jesus, His blood poured out, crying from the ground of Calvary, making up for all of man's inhumanity to man.

And Jesus tells each of us, "Hear the cry of Abel's blood. Hear all the people living in misery in the world today screaming with one voice for someone to help them. They are our neighbors." And by the grace Jesus gives us in the Eucharist, He wants us to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others who are in need. The blood of His cross can be at work in the world through us.

When Jesus quotes the commandment in tonight's Gospel to love your neighbor as yourself, that doesn't mean you have to love yourself first before you can love your neighbor. It means that you and your neighbor are one in our shared humanity. If my neighbor suffers, then I, as his neighbor, suffer with him and for him.

Every one of us here tonight was created by God for a specific mission and purpose. Included in that specific mission and purpose is for each one of us to discern what part of the cry of Abel's blood He wants us to respond to.

So, as we go from here, listen for that cry. Jesus wants you to hear it. And pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit so you know what voices in that cry you are called to do something about.

Then, go into action. Do what God asks you to do for the neighbor in your life. This is how the blood of Jesus can bring peace in our world, to one neighbor at a time.