

Here is my homily for tomorrow. The intensity of our life here in the Tenderloin clearly speaks to me thru these lectionary readings for the 15th Sunday. I am very aware now that because I am new to this tenderloin area, I can name some aspects of ministry here that have been taken for granted by those who have been here a long time. Some new ministries have opened up for me which I will share with you in the future.

Many thanks for your prayers !

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Homily 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time C
presented to St Boniface Parish, San Francisco, CA
July 10, 2016

Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Gospel of Luke 10:25-37

This Sunday's readings can be understood as a beautiful description of the Trinity.

The first reading from Deuteronomy we hear about God being in our mouths and hearts; the second reading from Colossians is about how Christ reconciled us with our heavenly Father; and the reading from the Gospel of Luke is about how the Holy Spirit works through any of us.

What a beautiful combination of readings which brings our attention to each part of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For us here at St Boniface Parish, I am struck by the awareness of how we as a parish have taken to heart and hand the gospel reading of the Good Samaritan. Most times when we hear this reading, we try to relate to the Good Samaritan or the one of the others who pass by the needy person by the road. But this time, I realized that instead of the hypothetical needy person, we have experienced the needy person as the homeless person who is sleeping on the sidewalks of the Tenderloin.

What began as a project from 10 years ago, has now blossomed into the Gubbio Project. The human and financial resources needed to sustain this reaching out to the Homeless folks of our neighborhood increased over time. And with prayer and hard work we have grown and nurtured this ministry to include a large number of volunteers and benefactors who make it possible for us to continue this ministry. Lay men and women stepped forward to help us maintain this ministry to what it is today.

Clearly the Holy Spirit has worked through all of the leaders, volunteers and benefactors of the Gubbio Project. And most recently, another parish, St John Episcopal Parish opened their church for homeless men and women.

All this began with the parish having the courage to make that leap of faith some 10 years ago to compassionately reach out to those who had been beaten down by the economic system and were struggling to find their way on this earth. We at our parish took the time to reach out and to speak to these folks, and to then invite them to rest in our pews during the week when we did not actively use the Church. And so it began.

Step by step the Gubbio Project has grown to now hosting over 100 men and women each morning from 6 am – 11am. Around 11 am most of them arise to get some lunch at St Anthony Foundation. The remaining folks end their rest by 2:30 pm and we begin the cleaning process to prepare the pews for the next day's guests. Each week day volunteers come to assist in keeping order and quiet time as the folks get their needed rest.

The central theme of the Gospel reading is that we ***are to love our neighbors as ourselves.*** We do not get the chance to choose our neighbors !

This means doing concrete acts for the person with concrete needs. It is so easy to read these scripture lines with abstract and generalizations of situations. But, the challenge is when the neighbor present themselves in concrete ways, like on our doorstep.

Do we make that leap of faith and commit to concrete acts to meet the concrete needs of the neighbor in need? We can and have done this because we sincerely believe that we will not be alone if we 'love' our neighbor. We trust that the Trinity will be there as we make this commitment to our neighbor. From that trust then comes the courage to make the leap of faith !

We only have to recall how Fr Alfred faced similar decisions as he was presented with the neighbors of hungry and starving veterans from World War II. This was not an easy time for the Friars nor for the parish as we faced what was presented to us over 50 years ago. What we see today at the St Anthony Foundation is beyond the plans, hopes and dreams of Fr Alfred or any of the friars or parishioners from 50 years ago ! Many doors were closed, and many new doors were opened as these 50 years have unfolded before all of us.

And so the bottom line is how have we celebrated the presence of the Trinity in the life of our parish faith community? Have we celebrated the presence of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our individual lives? In our family life? In our parish life?

The leaps of faith we have made personally, and corporately as a parish community have been incredible moments for us to reflect upon. That leap of faith of starting this parish, gave us the courage to make the leap of faith with the hungry veterans 50 years ago, and has now given us the courage to reach out to the tired homeless 10 years ago. Every leap of faith prepares us for the next leap of faith!

So let us give thanks to our loving Father in heaven for the gift of faith we have been given.

And then to give thanks to Jesus Christ for bringing us to be reconciled with our Father in heaven.

And finally, to give thanks for the Holy Spirit for the sustained and continued inspiration to guide and strengthen us as a faith community to recognize that next leap of faith as the St Boniface Parish !

Come Holy Spirit, Come !

Alleluia Alleluia !