

Septuagesima (28 January 2024)

“But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.”

+In the Name of...

As I walked into the grocery store this past week, a young man standing outside, trying to sell something, said to me, “Hey, I dig the old school kit!” Trying not to look too perplexed, I was thinking back to some of the British books I have read over the years. It seemed to me that “kit” was a sports uniform or maybe some kind of clothing indicating a school or team, such as a scarf or striped socks. By extension, I supposed that could include clothing in general. Because I was not sure, I just smiled. For the record, I was wearing a black suit with a clerical collar, although I

had spiced up the outfit with a charcoal grey sweater, lest anyone think that I am in a rut. I don't think of it as "old school", but compared to what contemporary young people wear, I suppose it is. I have been wearing dark suits for over twenty years, just changing between pairing a necktie or a clerical collar with them! Stability is comforting for many of us, especially traditional Anglicans. Most of us are at this Parish because we want a congregation that does not change with the latest fad, and where the faith stays as it was taught to the Saints.

I had two conversations this week that further illustrate this point. My mother and I were talking about the weather. I told her that after the ice storm things were melting near the church before they were by the Bi-Mart. She asked which one, and I replied the one by Eastminster. That would be Eastminster Presbyterian Church, which closed over ten years ago, but Mom knew instantly to which store I was referring. A couple of days later a friend asked me to lunch at the Mallory. The Mallory has

not been called the Mallory in at least ten years either, but I knew immediately where he was inviting me.

If you really want a blast from the past, a couple weeks back a friend was trying to tell me of something on the eastside but could not remember if it was on Union or Grand. I think the city must have changed Union Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. close to 30 years ago now! We like consistency; we like to know that things are going to be the same for us.

But sometimes it is good to venture outside our comfort zone. Lent should be one of those times. During Lent, we remember Christ's 40 day fast in the wilderness. In an attempt to make us more Christ-like, Holy Mother Church recommends we give up something for Lent or we take on something extra. I usually recommend both, depending on how big of a change either one would make in your life.

When we hear the Gospel lesson today, it is easy for us to consider ourselves the workers who were hired first thing in the

morning: many of us are in church all the time, and have been for years. It can seem unfair that someone who repents and becomes a Christian at the tail end of his life is just as worthy of a place in Heaven as we are. But secretly, aren't we sometimes like those who were hired at the end of the day? Although to be fair, they wanted to be hired but there was no work for them. I mean, we want to get by doing less than what is expected of us. Take for example, the Lenten mite boxes from last Lent. If you remember, I suggested that you take the money from what you gave up and put it in the mite box, which is collected by the Anglican Church Women. The logic is that if I give up chocolate sundaes for Lent and instead spend my money on cream puffs, I really have not given up very much; there is little sacrifice going on.

Now here is where I am really going to get myself in trouble: when we collected the mite boxes at the end of Lent, this Parish raised just over \$200. That does not sound bad, but let's look at it a little closer: one household gave half of that \$200. Another

household gave half of the half. The rest of us (and sadly, I am included in that group) had \$50 divided amongst us. We gave what we found in our couch cushions! Now I know what you're thinking, "Yeah, Father, and that is more than you are going to get from me this year!"

Anglicans do not like to talk about money. Perhaps given our reputation as the upper crust of society, it just seems inappropriate to bring it up in church. Yet, money is not off limits in Holy Scripture: Our Lord tells us in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Many of you fought very hard for this Parish when she was in danger of losing her moorings. Use this Lent to consider giving her a boost in her ability to carry out her mission. Maybe you will decide it is important enough to make a permanent increase.

I know the price of everything has gone up incredibly in the past few years. Every family has to do what is right for them, and you might be giving to the Parish all that you can afford. But

please reconsider your circumstances as you prepare for this Lent. Ask God if you are giving all that He wants you to give to our Parish. He might show you something that you had not considered. Do we really believe that Christ sacrificed Himself on that cross, or do we think it's just part of the pageantry devised to keep us interested in the service? If He could sacrifice everything because of His love for us, we owe it to Him to at least consider if we are able of sacrificing a little bit more for Him.

+In the Name...