

Choosing Life

The scripture readings for this Sunday are about making choices with consequences of life or death. We, human beings differ from other animals because we have free will to discern and choose. What an awesome gift and responsibility. The first reading from the Sirach, which reads, “Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him.” If we choose God, we are guaranteed life as Jesus said to his disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). However, the book of Psalm warns us from godless trappings saying, “For all their riches, if mortals do not have wisdom, they perish like the beasts” (49:21). Looking into our social environment, our lack of wisdom has immersed us in a culture of death. Our city streets have turned into death shrines, reminding us that we have accepted the culture of death as a norm. The right to life instead of as a gift from God, is considered a societal burden; therefore, disposable. The death wishes and fatalistic incidents we witness on our youth in the streets of Milwaukee is an indictment on us for our disregard to the gift of life.

Our community leaders, public officials and our society at large lament on the crime pandemic that put our urban communities under siege. No matter how much resources are invested, how many jails and prisons built, we have not made a dent in reducing crimes and social disorder. We cannot fight the current level of death culture by warehousing human beings into jails and detention centers. We have misplaced values. The US considered the most powerful nation in the world, lacks wisdom in dealing with each other created in the image and likeness of God. We have turned into finger-pointing culture, blame the other for the social chaos, mass shooting and death by reckless driving we witness daily across the nation. In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that he came to fulfil the law not to abolish it. He makes it clear that culture of death does not start with gruesome murder, rather with insult, disrespect, bias, prejudice, hatred, jealousy, adultery, etc. All these are sins against our fellow human person, diminishing our humanity and the dignity of our brothers and sisters.

The African saying, “It requires a village to raise a child” is reminder that every member of a community has to play positive role, creating a culture of life, that nurtures, teaches, mentors the upcoming generation. We have to choose the culture of life so that our children inherit a society better than we inherited. In our context, the Black Catholic faith community has an immense religious and historical responsibility to create such a nurturing environment, where families and individuals make life giving choices. As we celebrate “Black History Month,” creating proper environment, where the conscience of our children is properly formed is paramount. We have heard several times our pastor lamenting that we do not have programs for our children and youth. Where are our priorities, are we choosing life or death for our children? What are the values with transmit to them? Are we inspiring them to hope and aspire for something greater than them as cocreators because the divine spark is latent in them what “God has revealed to us through the Spirit.”

Abundant Blessing in the Black History Month

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