

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, C – July 10, 2022 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Bham – 5pm Sat. Vigil; 7:15, 8:30, & 11am Sunday Masses – 650 words

In the passage from Deuteronomy of the first reading, Moses said to the people that the commands he had placed on them – commands from God himself – were not “too mysterious and remote for [them]”, that they should have to go some unusual length to discover the Lord’s will. No, it had been communicated to them clearly and was indeed so near to who they were as persons that it was, as he said, “already in [their] mouths and in [their] hearts”; it was woven into the very fabric of their being.

In other words, God’s commandments do not do violence to us – they are not contrary to our nature; rather, they are its fulfillment. This was the great insight of St. Augustine, who came to understand through his search for the truth that our hearts were restless until they rested in God. Moreover, even if God’s purpose for us is built into who we are, yet he does not leave us alone to search for and hopefully discover it for ourselves. No, he also promulgates it to us in a positive way through revelation.

Thus Moses first told God’s chosen people what he wanted of them; this was then handed on in diverse ways throughout the Old Testament; then Christ himself re-asserted this teaching in his own preaching, as we heard in today’s gospel; and since then, the Church – the continuing presence of Christ in the world, invested with his own teaching authority – has proclaimed God’s law in every age. God loves us so much that he does not just leave us to figure it out; he ensures that we always have a teacher.

For every age of history dawns upon a world that is wounded and helpless, much like the victim of robbers in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Original Sin and its effects, with which we are all born, plus our personal sins, the effects of the sins of others, and the prevailing cultural factors in the society we find ourselves in, all conspire, as it were, to leave us “wounded on the roadside”, if you will – unable consistently to see clearly and act upon what is otherwise woven into our being and very near to us.

The Church is like the Good Samaritan who, in the name of Christ, comes to our rescue with her clear and accessible teachings. But not only. For she is not merely a teacher who lectures us on right and wrong, the Jiminy Cricket of the ages; no, she fleshes out her teachings in a surpassing way through the witness of her saints – those men and women transformed by God’s saving grace as to be sure examples for others. The saints show us that we can indeed “go and do likewise”, as Jesus taught.

How important the saints are for us, as we strive to live out what nature teaches and the Lord positively commands. It is surely never easy – especially when contrary forces come at us so persistently. What miracles of grace happen through their powerful intercession! St. Paul told in the second reading of how all are united in Christ, who is the head of his body, the Church – those in heaven and those on earth. We must never forget the Church’s “other half”, the saints, who have already reached the goal.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who gives us the grace to live as he commands, and the saints are there to pray for us, cheer us on, and show us how it’s done. We should know who our patron saints are and invoke them often. In fact, I know of families who even choose a different saint for each year, whom they will learn about and pray to as part of their family and personal devotion. We should celebrate the saints’ feast days and live out our beautiful and encouraging Catholic faith to the full!