

26th Sunday of the Year A September 25th, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

This past week the Israelis and the Palestinians again took center stage in world news. The Palestinians applied for statehood at the United Nations, and the Israelis spoke out against their request. For the past 60 years they have battled one another, the one side seeking security, the other side seeking independence. Over those years they have demonized the other side, and in doing so have failed to see their own wrong doing, their own flaws. And they have failed to see the other side.

Don't we all do the same thing? I think of our country, and how the political parties are so divided today. I think of how religion divides so many people, not just Jewish and Moslem, but Christian and Moslem. I think of our own Catholic faith which is divided between the right and the left. I think of the economic status that divides us. It is so easy to fall into demonizing the other, seeing no good what-so-ever in the other side, seeing only our differences.

And I think of our second reading today, a beautiful Christological hymn that goes back to the early Church.

“Have the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

There is another scripture passage, from John, that fits in so well with this one. It is the gospel of John that we read every year on Holy Thursday. At the Last Supper, “Jesus, knowing that he had come from God and was returning to God, got up from the table, took off his outer garments and, taking a towel, wrapped it around his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.” The outer garment that Jesus took off was more than his material clothing, in a sense it was his very divinity, and he humbly knelt before his disciples and washed their feet.

What is the outer garment that we all wear? There are many garments. I wear the garment of being middle-class, white, a Roman Catholic, a U.S. citizen of a political party, a Brown's fan. All of these are somewhat important, none of them are essential to who I am. When Jesus took off his outer garment, the scripture passage said that “knowing that he had come from God and was returning to God,” in other words knowing that he was Son of God, that is who he was. That was his essence.

And this is who we are. We have come from God and someday will return to God. We are children of God. It is not so important what head covering we wear, the color of our skin, our financial status, our political party. We are children of God. And if we would begin to recognize that we are all children of God, whether we are Moslem or Jew or Catholic, Republican or Democratic, or whatever, then we might begin to have peace in our relationships, peace in our world.

Our second reading said that Jesus humbled himself, becoming human, even dying on the cross. That is what we need to do, to be humble, to realize that we are all imperfect human beings, but also children of God. We are all brothers and sisters.