

Homily: May 2, 2022

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As we continue to celebrate Easter, we commemorate St. Athanasius. He had to deal with the heresy of Arius, who claimed Jesus wasn't divine. In his fierce battle against Arianism, Athanasius had many enemies and experienced seventeen years of exile as a bishop. But, before Athanasius died, the truth of Jesus' divinity did win out. Although we don't proclaim Arianism, perhaps we do not realize the connection between Jesus' divinity and us. We may be denying our own divinity though we have been created in the divine image of God. So we call out to our compassionate God.

Stephen spoke with wisdom and spirit. I guess we would say, he spoke with conviction about Jesus. Speaking about Jesus was still something relatively new at that early stage of Christianity. People, especially religious leaders, felt threatened by his wisdom—and Stephen became the first martyr for his faith.

Actually, ever since Jesus himself proclaimed the kingdom of God, Jesus was in trouble, especially with religious leaders. Jesus saw the divine in others, even tax collectors and prostitutes. He forgave them, inviting the divine to grow in them. Jesus also shared God's healing with gentiles as he did with the slave of a Roman centurion and daughter of a Syro-Phonician woman. He saw the divine in all people.

Today we are entering an era in which Jesus is being set aside by many people. Many present-day citizens of especially the Western world no longer consider God, Jesus, and institutional church to be relevant or necessary. Fortunately, many of them do remain faithful to basic human goodness. They help the less fortunate. Many youth are sincerely concerned about saving this planet from an ecological disaster. However a rising number of people no longer believe in the sacredness of our planet, the sacredness of life and the truth of universal equality of human beings. Many choose to chase after the illusory happiness of material and the illusory security of more guns.

However, Jesus is the one who shows us how to allow the divine in us—the image of God in each one of us—to flourish. What does divine really mean? It means

being Godly. The evangelist and letter-writer, St. John, tells us that godly means lovely—being a person of love, since God is love. Jesus showed us how to live as beings who are both human and divine. Jesus was perfectly so.

We regular human beings are hopefully opening ourselves over and over again to becoming more Christ-like—becoming more divine--by listening to the word and by actually consuming together the one body and blood of Christ. Why? Because our world needs more and more people becoming more and more Christ-like so that our planet and all of us not only survive but can be truly joyful.

Let us take some time today to contemplate about our own divinity so that we become more accepting and respectful of ourselves and others.