

## Homily: Nov. 9, 2023

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We celebrate God, whose Spirit calls us and challenges us to follow the “cross-carrying” Way of Jesus. We know his way is the right way, yet we find it hard to truly walk his talk. We call upon our compassionate God, “Lord, have mercy.”

St. Paul’s opening sentence struck me. **“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.”** We may owe several thousand dollars to someone. Perhaps we borrowed something precious, which we need to return. But, all such rightful paybacks are tiny compared to owing love to another person.

I don’t think we can fathom how radical Jesus’ way of life was, and what a continuation of radical love his holy Spirit continues to prompt from us until today. If we take Jesus seriously, we will look like fools, sound naïve about politics and economics. No wonder Jesus intimates the heated situations that can happen in families, where we must also choose Jesus over family opinion.

Paul, yesterday advised the Romans, “Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them” (Rm 12:13). In a subsequent verse, Rm 12:20, Paul adds, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Paul was basing himself on Jesus’ startling statement in Mat 5:44, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

**“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.”**

Sisters and brothers, until we refuse to use wars as our solutions—we are not living what our God really calls us to. Whether we are Christians, Jews and Muslims, our sacred books include words of God calling us to be peaceful [albeit there are the opposite kinds of verses, too. However, Jesus, ultimately shows us the dominant universal love of God]. Until we refuse the worldly WIN-LOSE mentality and goal, we will not be fulfilling the law of love. Moreover, we are making a mockery of the statement, “In God we trust” found on our money. For the time being, we are bomb-boomingly saying, “In war and power we trust—not in God.”

We must come back to, **“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.”**

Seeing the carnage continuing to play out between Russia and Ukraine in Ukraine, and seeing the expanding human and material destruction in Israel and Gaza strip, we should realize how fruitless and damaging war is.

I got this image (Hold up the image-see attachment) from a more elderly priest friend in Minnesota. One sees Jesus walking hand-in-hand with Palestinian boy on his left, draped in his flag, and a Jewish boy on his right, with the Star of David. This image is another way of expressing: **“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.”** It may also call us to be a bridge of love, just as Jesus was with other tribes than just his Jewish tribe.

Let us walk hand-in-hand with Jesus, too, no matter how foolish it looks or sounds, and no matter how many crosses we bear doing so. May we have the courage, along with our Church, to proclaim the Jesus Way of life—**“Love your neighbor as yourself”** and **“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another.”**