

"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." These are the powerful words that our Lord Jesus says to St. Peter in today's Gospel as he tries to dissuade Jesus from fulfilling His mission of Redemption. I mean it's amazing, in last week's Gospel St. Peter's like "the man" in that he makes this bold profession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah and our Lord establishes His Church on St. Peter and gives him the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven—and then *this week*, Jesus calls Peter "***Satan***" and accuses him of being an *obstacle* to His saving mission. I'm surprised Jesus didn't want "the keys" back.

But nevertheless listen again to the words of our Savior, "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." First, how do we as human beings tend to think? Well certainly we think in accordance with our nature. And given our fallen nature, which is unfortunately weak and inclined to sin, we can think many times in self-enclosed and self-centered ways that neglect and ignore others as well as our Heavenly Father who loves us and wants the best for us. As fallen creatures, we

tend to think many times using a selfish cost-benefit analysis: what is this going to cost *me*? How is this going to benefit *me*?

This self-enclosed, selfish attitude is championed by our popular culture that's growing increasingly secular. In fact, our hedonistic and relativistic culture tells us to "do whatever makes *you* happy"—"do whatever makes *you* feel good!" According to the culture, it's *all about me*. It doesn't matter what God thinks, it doesn't matter what's objectively right and wrong, and *it doesn't matter* how many people you have to use and step on in order to be happy and successful. This is what our popular culture tries to sell us on a daily basis.

So now, how does *God* think? Well like human beings, God thinks in accordance with His nature, which is infinite, perfect Love and Goodness. God is eternal Self-Gift for the good of another. Our Heavenly Father *only* desires the authentic good for His children—He *only* wants the best for His beloved children! And so given His nature, God is utterly and absolutely *selfless*. Out of His boundless generosity, which transcends human reason, God constantly seeks to give Himself to us so that we can be truly happy, free, and at peace. This divine desire is

perfectly manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ, who mounted the wood of the cross to save you and me from our own sins and from our own death. Jesus' victorious sacrifice on the cross is the *Supreme Proof that God is utterly selfless*. Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father! And so God, out of His perfect love for us, thinks in purely *selfless ways*, while we as human beings, who are fallen, tend to think in *selfish ways*.

And just to clarify, I am definitely not condemning human beings as *completely and totally evil and corrupt to the core*. That's not what we as Catholics believe. Unfortunately, that's what some of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation believed, like John Calvin and Martin Luther. No, as Catholics, we believe that while we are fallen and corrupt-*ed*, we are not *totally corrupt and depraved*. While we are weak and wounded in our nature, we are not *totally dead* in our nature, which is *inherently good*, since it is created in the image and likeness of God.

And so isn't it awesome and refreshing to see the goodness and beauty of human nature shine forth in the midst of our fallen world? Thankfully, we see this on a daily basis among those we know and love. And anyone who's watched the news in the last week or so, can't help

but marvel and rejoice at the heroic acts of love and self-sacrifice that are taking place in TX and LA as a result of Hurricane Harvey.

In the midst of immense suffering, we're seeing immense love and self-sacrifice. I mean all the amazing rescues and stories of people courageously risking their own lives in order to help and save others—*strangers they don't even know*—it's just beautiful to witness. Amidst all of the rescue efforts in TX after Hurricane Harvey, we're seeing *pure selflessness* on full display from so many, and I have no doubt that these heroes are mysteriously cooperating with God's grace in order to save lives. I'm reminded of the story of Houston policer officer, Sgt. Steve Perez who tragically drowned recently while trying to do his job and help find and save others who were in danger from the flood waters.

Brothers and sisters, *this* is the selflessness we're called to embody as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. *This is what true love is*: it is selfless, it is humble, it is sacrificial, it is heroic. It is pure self-gift for the authentic good of another. In other words, it's *exactly* what we see displayed on the cross of Christ. It's this type of pure, selfless love that we as human beings naturally seek and crave in this life.

Only when we begin to *think as God thinks*, are we then able to love as He loves, and to be selfless as *He* is selfless. Only when we think as God thinks, are we then able to lovingly offer ourselves as a gift to God and others in order to serve them. This is what the Lord means when He speaks to us through the second reading today from St. Paul's Letter to Romans: "Do not conform yourselves to *this age*, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." In other words, don't be enslaved by this present culture that is consumed by selfishness. Rather, we must conform ourselves to Christ and think *as God thinks*—*only then* will we be able to grow in selflessness.

In today's Gospel, our Lord Jesus exhorts us saying "Whoever wishes to come after me must *deny himself*, take up his cross, and follow me." Brothers and sisters, are we willing to *deny ourselves* on a daily basis in order to love Christ and others? Do we even strive to deny ourselves on a daily basis? One thing we need to be reminded of is that fasting and penance are not practices that we should *only do during Lent!* Rather these practices are great acts of love for God and others

that help us to grow in selflessness. What are we doing, if anything, in little or big ways, to grow in selfless love? Are we striving on a daily basis to live selflessly for God and others?

Brothers and sisters, when “we think as God thinks,” then we’re able to escape the narrow confines of our self-centeredness and see the dignity, the suffering, and the needs of others—those who we might be so quick to judge, criticize, or dismiss. This is what God wants for us—this is the whole point of being a disciple of Christ—to share in God’s own nature of perfect, selfless love—the *same love* that the world is so desperately crying out for.

In a few moments, our Lord and Savior will give Himself completely to us in the Most Holy Eucharist. As we prepare to worship and receive our merciful Savior Who *is Love Incarnate*, let’s plead with Him for the grace to think as God thinks, so that we can love as *He* loves and be selfless as *He* is selfless.