

FIFTH SUNDAY - A - FEBRUARY 5, 2017

**"SHARE YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY, SHELTER THE OPPRESSED AND THE HOMELESS.....
CLOTHE THE NAKED WHEN YOU SEE THEM AND DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK.....**

THEN YOUR LIGHT SHALL BREAK FORTH LIKE THE DAWN...

**THERE IS A STORY ABOUT THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLES...
HE ASKS, "WHEN DO YOU KNOW THAT THE DARKNESS HAS RECEDED AND THE LIGHT HAS DAWNED?"**

FIRST DISCIPLE ANSWERS, " WHEN IN A DISTANCE YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MAPLE TREE AND AN OAK TREE"

NO, IS THE REPLY

SECOND STUDENT, "WHEN IN A DISTANCE YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HORSE AND A DONKEY"

NO, THE MASTER RESPONDS...

"YOU KNOW THAT THE DARKNESS HAS RECEDED AND THE LIGHT HAS DAWN WHEN YOU CAN LOOK IN THE EYES OF ANY WOMAN AND SEE THERE YOUR SISTER AND LOOK INTO THE EYES OF ANY MAN AND THERE YOUR BROTHER - THAT'S WHEN YOU KNOW THAT THE DARKNESS HAS RECEDED AND THE LIGHT HAS DAWNED"

OBVIOUSLY, THIS ISSUE OF SHELTERING THE OPPRESSED AND

HOMELESS AND NOT TURNING YOUR BACK IS A KEY ISSUE IN OUR

COUNTRY AS WE GATHER HERE THIS DAY...

AS THE RECENT TRAVEL BAN MAKES ITS WAY THROUGH THE COURTS...

I ASK YOUR OPENNESS AS I TRY TO ADDRESS THIS COMPLEX ISSUE

IN A FEW MOMENTS BASED ON OUR BELIEFS AS CHRISTIANS/ CATHOLICS

I AM BASING MY REMARKS PRIMARILY ON AN ARTICLE BY BISHOP

ROBERT MCELROY IN A RECENT ISSUE OF AMERICAN ON THE "SOUL OF

OUR NATION". I RECOMMEND IT WHOLEHEARTEDLY...

IN THERE HE TALKS ABOUT HOW OUR LOVE FOR OUR COUNTRY CAN BE

A VIRTUE ..

***HOWEVER, HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT IT IS ONLY VIRTUOUS IF IT IS
ROOTED IN A SENSE OF MORAL OBLIGATION AND A CARE FOR HUMANITY
BUT NOT IF IT IS ROOTED IN PRIDE, ISOLATIONISM & DISCRIMINATION
SO, IT DEPENDS.....ON OUR MOTIVES***

***HE BELIEVES WE MUST WRESTLE WITH THREE QUESTIONS IF WE WANT
TO HAVE A HEALTHY AND MORAL PATRIOTISM...***

THAT ALSO CARES FOR THE OPPRESSED AND HOMELESS

THE FIRST QUESTION IS: WHO ARE "WE THE PEOPLE"?

***OUR PATRIOTISM IS HEALTHY IF IT IS EXTENDED TO ALL THE PEOPLE
OF THE UNITED STATES AND NOT JUST SOME OF THE PEOPLE.....***

IT CANNOT BE EXCLUSIONARY

WE BELIEVE IN THE EQUALITY OF ALL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS...

***HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE WELL-BEING OF OUR NATION CANNOT BE
ADVANCED BY A SEARCH FOR UNITY ROOTED IN EXCLUSION....***

***STATING ALSO THAT THIS CATHOLIC SENSE OF SOLIDARITY HAS BEEN SO
ABSENT IN OUR NATION DURING THE PAST DECADE THAT WE HAVE LOST
OUR WAY...***

***THE FIRST STEP TO RECOVERY IS TO REDISCOVER THE BONDS THAT TIE
US ALL TOGETHER AS A PEOPLE....***

THE SECOND QUESTION WE MUST ADDRESS IS:

WHAT DOES GREATNESS MEAN FOR THE UNITED STATES?.

***DOES GREATNESS REVOLVE PRINCIPALLY AROUND QUESTIONS OF
POWER, WEALTH AND SUCCESS?***

***OR IS THE GREATNESS WE SEEK FOUNDED IN THE ORDER OF JUSTICE
FREEDOM, TRUTH AND SOLIDARITY?***

***IN SHORT, IS IT A MATERIAL GREATNESS OR A GREATNESS OF THE SOUL?
WE, AS A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS ARE NOT TIED TOGETHER BY BLOOD,
BUT RATHER BY THE SET OF ASPIRATIONS AND IDEALS OUR FOUNDERS
SET FORTH IN 1776 - THEY BOTH SUCCEEDED IN ATTAINING AND FAILED
TO ATTAIN.***

***SO PATRIOTISM FOR US AS AMERICANS IS AN ASPIRATION RENEWED IN
EVERY GENERATION BY UNDERSTANDING BOTH OUR NATION'S IDEALS
AND ITS DEFECTS...***

***OUR PATRIOTISM THEN IS AN ONGOING CHALLENGE TO IMPROVE OUR
CULTURE, OUR SOCIETY AND OUR GOVERNMENT...***

AS POPE FRANCIS REMINDED US IN HIS ADDRESS TO CONGRESS...

***AMERICA'S GREATNESS LIES IN THE FREEDOM PROCLAIMED BY
ABRAHAM LINCOLN...***

THE JUSTICE LIVED OUT BY DOROTHY DAY...

***THE POIGNANT DREAM OF RACIAL EQUALITY ARTICULATED BY MARTIN
LUTHER KING, JR. AND THE SPIRITUAL RICHNESS OF THOMAS MERTON***

***THE FINAL QUESTION POSED: IS OUR NATIONALISM/ OUR PATRIOTISM
ROOTED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES ALONE OR***

IS IT CONNECTED TO OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY?

***POPE BENEDICT SPEAKING ABOUT GLOBALIZATION LAMENTED THAT
GLOBALIZATION MAKES US NEIGHBORS BUT DOES NOT NECESSARILY***

MAKE US BROTHERS AND SISTERS...

WE MUST ASK OURSELVES - WHAT ARE THE BONDS OF BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD THAT THE REALITY OF GLOBALIZATION THRUSTS UPON THE PEOPLE OF EVERY NATION AS MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY?

THE STARTING POINT FOR IDENTIFYING THE DEMANDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMON GOOD LIES IN OUR BELIEF THAT OUR GOD IS THE FATHER OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN FAMILY...

THAT CREATION IS A GIFT TO EVERY MAN AND WOMAN

THAT THE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR PLANET BELONGS TO ALL AND THAT WAR IS A MASSIVE FAILURE FOR THE ENTIRE HUMAN FAMILY...

BISHOP MCELROY CONCLUDES WITH THIS: "THE CATHOLIC VOTE WAS PIVOTAL IN THE 2016 ELECTION. NOW THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY MUST BE PIVOTAL IN BRINGING THE VISION OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING INTO THE DIALOGUE THAT WILL UNFOLD IN THE COMING MONTHS" QUITE A CHALLENGE FOR US...

OUR OPENING PASSAGE FROM ISAIAH ABOUT SHARING YOUR BREAD WITH THE HOMELESS AND SHELTERING THE HOMELESS GIVES US GOD'S ANSWER WHEN THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED:

WE'RE DOING SUCH GOOD AND HOLY THINGS. WHY DON'T YOU NOTICE AND DO WHAT WE WANT?

THEY DETAIL THEIR SACRIFICES,..

THEIR PUTTING ON OF SACKCLOTH AND ASHES...

BOWING THEIR HEADS AND THEIR PENANCES, INCLUDING SELF-FLAGELLATION...

THEY DID THIS TO PROVE HOW PIOUS THERE WERE BUT GOD'S RESPONSE WAS CRYSTAL CLEAR: "THE FAST YOU ARE KEEPING TODAY WILL NOT GIVE YOU A HEARING ON HIGH"

THE PEOPLE SOUGHT GOD DAY AFTER DAY...BUT GOD ANSWERED THEIR GRUMBLING BY BASICALLY SAYING - HOW DO YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO COMPLAIN AS IF YOU WERE A NATION THAT DOES JUSTICE?

AND THEN GOD GOES ON TO TELL THEM THAT WHEN THEY MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR OTHERS THEY WILL FIND THEIR PRAYERS ANSWERED AND THEIR OWN LIFE IMPROVED AS WELL...

AGAIN, QUITE A CHALLENGE FOR US -

LET US CONTINUE TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR OTHERS...

LET US COMMIT OURSELVES TO MAKING OUR COUNTRY MORE INCLUSIVE, MORE COMMITTED TO BEING SPIRITUALLY AND MORALLY GREAT AND MORE DEVOTED TO FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL COMMON GOOD AS WELL AS OUR OWN COMMON GOOD...

LET US PRAY FOR OUR COUNTRY AND OUR COMMITMENT TO SHARING OUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY, SHELTERING THE OPPRESSED AND THE HOMELESS.....

AND NOT TURNING OUR BACK...

THEN INDEED THE LIGHT SHALL RISE FOR US IN THE DARKNESS

