

Sunday Homily

Title Homily on Faith: Genuine and Faux

Date: October 12, 2025

Sunday: 28th Sunday of the Year (C cycle)

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19.

By: Fr. Bob Schmitz

Text: Many of us memorized the Ten Commandments in our youth. My teachers left out an important line, the very first line. Here it is: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Gen 20:2). God called us by liberating us; only then, did God give us the law. If we understand the commandments through that first line, a new meaning comes to light. The Ten Commandments are the necessities to live as God’s liberated people: respect each other; respect property; tell the truth; don’t desire another person’s things; control your personal desires. Even the first three—on God’s relationship with us—are about liberation. God’s people were just then freed from Pharaoh’s tyranny. Pharaoh was seen as a god. This informs the first commandment: there can be no gods but the One God. The enslaved artisans made statues of Pharaoh, the so-called god. So, the second commandment liberates us: you must not bow down to an image of a false god. Egyptian overlords used their god Pharaoh’s name to oppress and control God’s people. The third commandment prohibits using God’s name to abuse people; we may not use God’s name to manipulate others. The commandments reveal that we did not trade one tyrant for another, one oppressive god for another. We worship a different God, the God who liberates.

Worshipping this liberating God requires a different kind of response from us. The commandments participate in the Bible’s central theme. God desires to share divine life with us. The term for this dynamic is *holiness*. God shares God’s holiness. By extension, the infinitely free God shares freedom. The word *holy* means to be separated from the savagery of this

world, to be set apart from cruelty. Holiness sets us apart from anything that degrades the human spirit. To be holy means that we will not participate in whatever or with whomever excludes, judges, criticizes, puts down others, or abuses others.

Then, God fills willing hearts with divine life. We can find inner satisfaction by pursuing the good and find inner peace by living principled lives. We can enjoy each day hoping for a better world. We can cultivate respect for creation; promote respect for others, especially those with whom we differ; we can develop respect for ourselves. To be holy means we are open to God's gifts of life and love. The proper form of religion becomes gratitude.

Jesus of Nazareth grew up in a system that misused the commandments to create man-made regulations meant to punish, to abuse, and exclude. People developed a new form of tyranny using divine law to keep people down. Jesus rejected that system. For instance, they did not understand the causes of illness and disease. People thought that sin caused sickness. Sin, they thought, was more contagious than any illness. So, society forced the lepers from their homes and loved ones, not even permitting them to enter places for prayer, the temple or synagogue.

Over the last few weekends, we have heard how Jesus attempted to liberate people for a life of holiness. Jesus filled hearts with God's love. He healed the sick, raised the poor, included the disenfranchised, forgave the sinner, and spoke truth to power. When he cured the lepers, he told them to follow the law by going to the priests to certify their cure. But he may have wanted them to reject the entire system. To seek certification meant they remained in the system that excluded and degraded them. One of them rejected that system of exclusion; just one opted to show appreciation, and, therefore, find the religion of gratitude to God.

Now then, Luke wants to teach us more. If God is creator of all humankind, will God's liberation reach beyond God's own people to all God's family? In today's brief reading, Luke responds twice. He writes a simple sentence about this one former leper "He was a Samaritan." As you know, Samaritans were the religious enemies of the Jews. Would God's care reach even to his own people's enemies? The definitive answer comes from words Luke puts in the Lord's mouth: "Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks" Then he says to the Samaritan, "Your faith has saved you" Three chapters before this event, Jesus taught that the children of Abraham endangered themselves by their exclusivity and their cruelty. Jesus warned: "People will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God."

We are being challenged. Being God's people is not a privilege; it's a mission. We are to live God's holiness for all to imitate. We are to live in freedom by avoiding allegiances that divide God's family, by avoiding loyalties that separate peoples. Our mission is to live God's justice, peace, and mercy, to live God's inclusive love. Unfortunately, too many forgot to teach the first line of the commandments: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that house of slavery." My friends, be grateful for the ultimate freedom, freedom to live God's love.