

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 18 September 2022

Scriptures: Amos 8:4-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13

Homily: Fr. Ken

Now that the new school year is once again on track, we are reminded of the welcome challenge of education. Indeed, it is our responsibility as Catholic people to share the gift of our Catholic faith with others, especially those who are young: school children, teenagers, and college students.

Jesus set the example.

Paralleling his directive to the seventy-two disciples, Jesus directs his twelve apostles to do what he is doing: "to proclaim the good news, the kingdom of God is here; to cure the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse lepers, and cast out demons".

And they did. The disciples did what Jesus did well before the Resurrection and Pentecost.

Today, as the People of God, we are called to do nothing less than Jesus. We are called to step into the lives of the alienated. We do this, each according to our individual employment, vocation, talents, and capabilities, and especially in the realm of education. And, we do it zealously.

Today in our society there exists an ever-increasing sense of alienation. It is experienced by young and old alike.

Historically and more to the issue: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Heidegger, Hegel, and Kierkegaard have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.

That is the call of Jesus. It is the call of our global patron St. Francis of Assisi. It is call of St. Rita. And it is the call of Pope Francis.

Missed opportunities and diminished credibility in society and in the Church have enlarged the socio-political, economic, and personal tragedy of alienation. It is experienced and felt at all ages.

The classes we have taught in our Religious Education Program, as well as previously in our St. Rita Catholic School, not only educated students about our Catholic faith, but they paved the way to bridge the gap of alienation by reconnecting students with the world and people around them.

Looking back to the time of Jesus in today's scripture readings, we ask: Who, then, were the people the apostles and disciples encountered as they moved from village to village?

Who are the people we today encounter in the office, in the classroom, in the marketplace, on the streets?

They are all our sisters and brothers who are alienated. They live in alienation.

There are many sources and forms of alienation. Traditionally, there are four ways people are alienated: from the product of their work itself; from their daily productive activity; from their own personal human life; and, from their fellow women and men.

These are also witnessed in the work and lives of both educators and students.

To those four ways of alienation, we must today add the overpowering and overwhelming force of technology. Like fire, wind, air, and water, the impact contradicts for good and evil.

Technology has birthed an exponential increase in connectedness, but a dismal diminishing in communication. Our young students have become disassociated with what matters in life. Stated simply, instead of spending time with friends, they spend it alone, collecting friend requests. Rather than savoring their food, they take pictures of it, and post them on Facebook. They forget that

technology is just a tool, and that deep human communication is very different.

Social scientists reveal that the alienation experienced by youth originates from a deep unease in the Western world demonstrated by a marked increase in nervous disorders, a reluctance to make realistic commitments, a surge in drug and alcohol abuse, as well as unemployment, poverty, and youth suicides. For alienated students, hope for the future is uncertain, sometimes extinguished.

Our responsibility is clear. As educators and faithful followers of Jesus we are called to be actively engaged with conviction, creativity, and courage by effectively ministering to alienated educators and students, a task which, by the grace of God, is truly possible.

T. S. Elliot is wrong. We, humanity, can stand an infinite amount of reality. How? By progressing simply and humbly in the example of Pope Francis and his saintly namesake. Lest we fall prey to the indictment of compassion deficit, we need to develop a more Christ-like and Francis-like attitude of openness and understanding, and a dedicated commitment to active engagement. Such is fundamental to our Religious Education Program.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "The struggle of today is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future also".

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