

Homily for March 2, 2017

Of all the illusions nursed by modern people, one of the most problematic is the belief that moral choices are not right or wrong, but rather neutral. Neutrality is the notion that human beings can detach themselves from all crucial choices and decisions in life. Social neutrality straddles the fence of public opinion and refuses to come down on either side of the great social issues. Moral neutrality shows itself in broadminded tolerance which sees all matters of good and evil, not in terms of black and white, but in terms of differing shades of grey. There was popular book with such a title that was all the rage a couple of years ago. Spiritual neutrality chooses neither belief nor atheism, but leaves the matter of God's claim on our lives up in the air.

Today's reading from Deuteronomy makes it clear, we cannot live our lives with Fifty Shades of Grey; life is all about choices that can be good or bad, right or wrong.

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live,

Here is God speaking through Moses as the people of Israel stood on the threshold of the Promised Land. Moses says that to enter into a covenant with the Lord is to make a decision, to commit oneself wholly to God and God's way. This is one of the most explicit calls for decision that the Bible presents. And as we know from our own experiences of life, the choices we make not only affect us but the generations that come after us, for good or for ill.

One area where we are very aware of this increasingly is in relation to creation. We cannot just choose to carelessly live in relation to the natural world without reaping the consequences climate change. To choose life for future generations means to take seriously our relationship to creation that leads to choices that help to restore the health and life of the planet.

Whether you are a Hebrew from long ago listening to Moses, or a modern person encountering these words in worship we cannot put them aside. The most fundamental choice of life lies before those who have come to this boundary line. Indeed, the choice is life itself - or death; blessing - or curse. Our choices really do influence and affect our experience of life.....

Moses' call for decision about the great issue of life exposes 2 fundamental truths about the illusion of neutrality in our modern world.

1. It is a luxury for which someone will need to pay
2. and the refusal to choose is actually a choice.

We live in a world that is so bent on personal choice, and therefore no one person's choice is better than another. Such a perspective believes that the choices we make have no moral consequence associated with them. Such a viewpoint leads many today to believe that life can be free from commitment, sacrifice and suffering. To be free from commitment has profoundly affected the young in our country. Marriages that end in divorce because the couple have

“fallen” out of love and are unwilling to make the hard choice of working towards the renewal of their commitment, leaves children confused and so often directionless.

Lives free of the willingness to sacrifice has resulted in an attitude where the choice to have sex does not need to include the possible fruit of having and rearing children. Such an attitude has resulted in 4 million abortions in Canada since 1969, when abortion became legal.

We also think that life should be free from suffering. Witness now the advent of Medical Assistance in Dying. People who believe that upon ending their lives their suffering will end do not realize that upon their death they will have to give an account to Jesus Christ for the moral choice they had just made.

In all of these examples, divorce, abortion and MAID this is a luxury for which someone has to pay, be it the children, the babies, or those who have killed themselves.

Deuteronomy makes it clear that the refusal to choose is actually a choice. Those who think that every choice is morally neutral have actually chosen to turn their hearts away from the Lord and to thus be led astray and bow down and worship other god's.

Lent is the Liturgical Season when we are called to seriously reflect on our choices. How are we living in relation to creation; how are we expressing commitment, sacrifice and the willingness to undergo times of suffering as we live out the few decades allotted to us that is our earthly life?

Daily, says Jesus we are to choose to pick up our cross. Daily we are to choose to live, not according to the dictates of the fleeting world, but in accordance with God's will. Let us remember moral choices are not neutral but consequential. Let our choices affirm our love so as to walk in God's ways and discover more deeply the experience expressed in this evening's psalm:

***Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water,
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.***