

There is a story of this curmudgeon of a man who was constantly treating others in a demeaning, disrespectful and discriminatory way. When another man finally challenged his behavior, the curmudgeon said: “What, you think that I discriminate, that I show partiality? I don’t show partiality, I hate everyone equally!”

Obviously that is not what God intended in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading from the book of Saint James, when He said that we are to “show no partiality”.

God’s mandate that we must not show partiality does not mean that we are not to have special, close, friendships. It means that we are not to treat some people as having less value than others. Note that the words “no partiality” refers to people. In no way should it be used to justify not speaking out against evil behaviors. Meaning—we are not to attempt to make a judgment about the state of a person’s soul in relation to God—that is not something we know. However, we are responsible to judge evil actions and philosophies. *In Ezekial Chapter 3, God says:*

***If I say to the wicked, You shall surely die—and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade the wicked from their evil conduct in order to save their lives—then they shall die for their sin, but I will hold you [that means us] responsible for their blood.***

Now, this doesn’t mean that we are to patrol the streets for, let’s say, fornicators, or adulterers, or gossipers. It means that when confronted with evil actions or philosophies when these cross our path, we are responsible to help save our brothers and sisters. We are responsible to speak out to dissuade.

Showing no partiality means that we treat our neighbors with charity, fair-mindedness and evenhandedness, even when we don’t particularly like them. Essentially, we are to treat everyone equally. Why does God want us to treat everyone equally? It is because every person,

no matter their size, or age, or gender, or the color of skin, or social status, and especially those with no voice, every person is created in God's image and likeness and is precious to God. So, when we discriminate, we discriminate against God too. We are all equal members of the one body of Christ. That is why the two greatest commandments must be taken together.

***Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...and...love your neighbor as yourself.***

You see, loving your neighbor as yourself means that my neighbor's dignity is equal to my dignity. So, when God says "show no partiality", He means that we must give others their due, which is the definition of the word "justice", or in other words we recognize their dignity—which is the dignity that He gave them.

When we lose our understanding of "why" we are to show no partiality to others and/or we neglect or reject God's Word we ultimately end in rejecting the dignity of at least some of our neighbors.

Consider the Dred Scott decision. Those of you who are familiar with history know that "Dred Scott" was a Supreme Court decision ultimately regarding the dignity of two black Americans. In 1846, Dred and Harriet Scott each filed separate petitions in the Circuit Court of St. Louis to gain their freedom from Irene Emerson. Eleven years later Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney ruled that Dred, because of his race, was not a citizen of the United States. He had no right to bring suit in a federal court. He had never been free while living in "free states," and that Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery. That's interesting because our Constitution requires Congress to make laws and the courts to only interpret them. At any rate, the entire Scott family was to remain enslaved. It took the Civil War to abolish slavery, not the courts.

The 13th amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States, passed the Senate, the House, and the necessary number of states by 1865. The 13th amendment provides that:

***Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude...shall exist within the United States or its territories.***

This amendment formally acknowledged the God-given dignity of our enslaved brothers and sisters. Yet, today, instead of learning from history, we have repeated it, and at an even more egregious level.

As you know in 1973 the Supreme Court ruled that the so-called “right of privacy (which is not mentioned in the text of the Constitution or Bill of Rights) is broad enough to encompass a woman’s decision whether or not to ‘terminate’ her pregnancy.” This meant that babies in the womb have no rights and can be killed by their mothers. And, since that time it is estimated that we have, in our own country alone, killed almost 60 million unborn babies. Essentially, our Supreme Court neglected God’s Word and rejected the truth that each person has dignity and is created in God’s image and likeness, and now that evil is continuing to manifest itself in the ongoing killing and sale of unborn babies bodies and body parts.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in Dred Scott was not of God. To those who would say that the Church did not condemn slavery until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, I would say look at the writings of Eugene IV in 1435, Paul III in 1537, a host of other popes during this timeframe, but especially Gregory XVI in 1839, when he published his universal document “In Supremo”. He said:

***We...warn and strongly exhort...faithful Christians of every condition that, no one in the future dare to bother unjustly, despoil of their possessions, or reduce to slavery,***

***Indians, blacks, or other such peoples...and we prohibit and strictly forbid opinions contrary to what we have set forth...***

Unfortunately, some of the dissenting American bishops chose to selectively interpret “In Supremo”. Just as we today must defend Church teaching even when it is not popular, it was the duty of those bishops and knowledgeable Catholics to sustain the Pope’s teaching even though it was not popular in the American culture of the time.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in Dred Scott was not of God. The Supreme Court’s ruling in Roe v. Wade was not of God. In both cases, the Court rejected the God-given dignity of a select class of human beings. Here is what Christ said (in John 8:44) to all who refuse to hear and keep His word:

***You belong to your father the devil and you willingly carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies.***

As Pope Saint John Paul the Great once said:

***If you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace the truth –the truth revealed by God.*** [Pope John Paul II, 1999 visit to St. Louis]

We must embrace the truth and act to further it. During the next three weeks in the Parish Hall, you and I have the opportunity to work for justice, defend life and embrace the truth. Please read the materials and consider signing the petition defending the dignity of our unborn brothers and sisters.

***The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil.***

As Archbishop Sheen said:

***The Tragedy of our time is that those who still believe in honesty lack fire and conviction, while those who believe in dishonesty are full of passionate conviction...***

***“Broadmindedness”, when it means indifference to right and wrong, eventually ends in hatred of what is right.***

We are not to show partiality as it regards a person’s dignity. But, we are to show partiality when it relates to evil and sin. I am not talking about rules, I am talking about “Love”. As Christ’s Church, we must stand against any law that denies the dignity of human beings and, yes, we will be persecuted for it because we are standing with our Savior, who said: (John Chapter 15):

***If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you...In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.***

Deacon John Krepps recently preached on the story of Saint Maximilian Kolbe at one of the daily masses. I am going to repeat a little of what he said. When Saint Maximilian was a young child he received an extraordinary revelation. One night when he asked the Mother of God “what is to become of me.” She appeared holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked if he was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that he should persevere in purity and the red that he should become a martyr. He said: “I accept them both.”

World War II broke out in 1939. The Nazis invaded Poland and Fr. Maximilian wrote an article that provoked his own arrest and subsequent martyrdom. In the article he said:

***No one in the world can change Truth. What we can do and should do is to seek truth and to serve it when we have found it. The real conflict is the inner conflict...There are two irreconcilable enemies in the depth of every soul: good and evil, sin and love. And what use are the victories on the battlefield if we ourselves are defeated in our innermost personal selves?***

We may not be called to become martyrs, but we are called to speak the truth with humility and love, and to act to protect the God-given dignity of others even if we must suffer for it—because taking up our cross and suffering along with Christ is the mark of a Christian.

***During the Cold War a group of Soviet Soldiers came to a large barn in a farmer's field. The soldiers found hundreds of people in prayer. The captain said: You are violating Soviet law. Prayer is forbidden. We give you five minutes to leave. All who remain will be shot. Two left. The Soviet Soldiers threw down their guns and said: We want to be Christians too. We only wanted to be sure that you were REALLY Christian.***