

Sunday September 5th, 2021
23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Parishioner Reflection

By: Janice Lahti

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? (James 2:1)

From all the readings for this Sunday, this line jumped right off the page. It set me off on a week of reflection and soul searching.

This question posed by James triggered the troublesome words of Jesus ...for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike. (Matthew 5:45).

These words drop me right into the center of the dilemma of engaging in the pesky practice of differentiation – who is like me and who is not, who belongs and who does not, who makes me uncomfortable and who does not, who looks like me and who does not, who believes what I believe and who does not....

And of course, what do I do with the conclusions I reach from the practice of differentiation? On a personal level I will exclude people, ignore them, fail to extend an invitation, pretend I don't see someone on the street, speak poorly of another, blame the ills of the times on a group of "others". I play favourites and try to control who enjoys the sun and who gets soaked in the rain.

Do I really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? Time to do an inventory of my biases and how they impact others.

If I pay close attention and catch myself in the game of differentiation, I can rethink my views and pray for the grace to be someone who includes not excludes. I can work to overcome my fears and speak up to challenge the systems I'm part of. "Let us not play favourites with work assignments, wage increases, committee member selections, and charities we give to. Let's not ask for forgiveness only when we won't be exposing ourselves to consequences we must accept. Let's be modern day prophets and not turn a blind eye but speak out and challenge institutions (political, religious, educational) on their acts of omission or overt acts of exclusion."

I do believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. But I am a weak and self-absorbed human in need of daily mercy to take on this challenge of unearthing how and with whom I play favourites. God's love is not stingy or parceled out to a select few who follow the Law. Jesus went well

beyond the Law in his teaching. He is asking me to do the same. Choose charity and mercy over correctness.

May God grant me the grace to be vulnerable, to give away everything rather than keep myself safe and comfortable. May God inspire me to remove locks, open doors and let my fellow human beings and all creatures out into the sun. And may I keep a sturdy umbrella close by and venture out often to offer my neighbour shelter from the rain.