

Character Council of Hamburg Inc.
“Creating a Culture of Character”

Holy Week Reflection

Sincerity

Sadly, as we approach Jewish Passover and solemnly enter into the Christian Holy Week Commemoration; we are starkly reminded that in recent months prominent persons nurtured in our Judeo-Christian moral code have betrayed trusting investors from the working class. Even those who could afford a substantial loss do not deserve to have their lives shaken. They are often enough the benefactors of our public institutions and religious organizations Community leaders who organize the campaigns for human development across the world.

Note the definition:

“Sincerity is eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives.”

To become a victim of someone else’s deceit, greed or attachment to power is a truly heart-breaking, devastating experience. The prophets of our sacred tradition and Jesus himself confronted the hypocrisy of their day and encouraged their listeners to follow the wisdom of our forebearers:

“...The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake,
and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up;
“Repairer of the breach, “ they shall call you,
“Restorer of ruined homesteads.”

If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath
from following your own pursuits on my holy day;
If you call the Sabbath a delight,
and the Lord’s holy day honorable;
If you honor it by not following your ways,
seeking your owns interests, or speaking with malice --
Then you shall delight in Lord,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; (Isaiah 58:11-14)

Setting one’s priorities based on sound Judeo-Christian values which also coincide with universal values found in Islamic, Native American and Asian faith traditions, is the path to internalizing sincerity.

We church members and disciples know how essential it is for us to be sincere! More is caught by those young persons we are trying to influence for good in who we are and by what we do. Deceitful words and actions can kill a child’s spirit.

I am not alone in wondering if sincerity can be taught. Isn’t it rather a virtue coming right from a person’s heart and mind? Yes, we adults can affirm and encourage, but an individual in one’s formative years definitely grows through a life-long experience of being treated with sincerity.

In contemporary times the evil influences of greed, addictive behavior and over the top competitiveness can destroy a person’s transparency. Vigilance on the part of

parents and friends is a welcome support. Courage to confront noticeable changes in a person's personality and habits and personal determination to seek help as soon as we realize we are isolated/estranged from family and friends, are responses that need constant reinforcement.

“Following Christ is not easy. Like Jesus we will experience betrayal, denial, being ignored, falsely accused and left alone. Even friends will “look on from afar.” Family is the gift given to us so we never stand alone. Being together is the stuff of holiness.” (Notes from Family Ministries: Deacon Tom and Gini Schultz)

The faith community provides shelter for our families. No one, no parent, no couple need stand alone. We in the Christian Community have a mission and responsibility during this sacred season of Passover and Holy Week to clarify with one another and our children the important distinction between the hypocrisy of a small elitist band of Sanhedrin leaders who pursued the execution of Jesus for the sake of their people, (as they saw it) living under Roman occupation and the entire nation of Israelites living at that time in Palestine. The whole peoples of Judaism should not be “blamed” for Jesus' death. Furthermore, the private hearing before Pilate had barely room for thirty people, not a cast of thousands. Jesus, we remember, dear sisters and brothers, came to teach us how to be fully human, pouring out his life in love, dying to repair the breach between humankind and God caused by sin both personal and cumulative, down through the ages. The time, place and form of execution were circumstances of history and we understand in retrospect that scapegoating the Jewish Community was not then, and is not now, in the best interest of God's dream for humanity. We can only hope that each person is seeking the truth sincerely and living out of that truth faithfully. As Christians we understand that Jesus died for all people and all generations. However, we believe this from a faith perspective. A handful of misguided Jewish leaders are responsible for Jesus' death. Jesus Himself never intended that we would retaliate or convert anyone through violence. (Luke 22:51)

So, once again we can re-visit those confrontational scenes in the Gospels as recorded by third generation Christians who portrayed Jesus as the Master of his own destiny, especially in John's Gospel, realizing that Jesus was confronting their insincerity.

At this, Jesus, who was teaching in the temple area, cried out:

“So you know me,
and you know my origins?
The truth is, I have not come of myself.
I was sent by One who has the right to send me
and him you do not know.
I know him because it is from him I come;
he sent me.”

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a finger on him because his hour had not yet come. (John 7:28-30)

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