

Homily for Morning Prayer

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STS General Retreat: September 30, 2009

Text: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and (one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

When I was a small child of 6 years old, I understood the nature of our existence in this world...in the following statement:

"One dark night in the middle of the day, two dead boys got to play. Back to back they faced each other, drew their swords and shot each other. Two deaf policemen, hearing the noise, came and revived the two dead boys. And if you think my story is tall, ask the blind man who saw it all."

Words, words, words!

Just because we can say them doesn't make them true.

Just because it makes sense to us, doesn't make us wise.

How do we know this is true? Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up. (vs.1)

We all know this to be true. We all have experiences we could share. Here is one of mine. A while ago I was speaking with one of my loquacious revisionist friends who was going on at length about his pleasure at the Churchwide Assembly actions.

I quietly and politely replied that Jesus had said "No" to this kind of behavior and thus to the actions of the Churchwide Assembly. "Jesus never said, 'No.'" he replied. "Yes He did! In Leviticus 18!" "No," he replied. "That's impossible. Jesus was never in...." And then he became silent. He knew that God was speaking and our God is the Triune God. God the Father was speaking. Jesus the Son

was there, saying this. And now the Holy Spirit is teaching this. I knew I had won!! To myself I said, "YES! Who's next?"

And then it suddenly hit me. The log in my own eye. You see, knowledge puffs up. But it is love that builds up. Victory does not equal love.

So now we need to look at love. We know there are three kinds of love: *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. We know *eros* best. We live in an *eros* based culture. But we have been trained to control *eros* in our lives. So we sublimate it into *philia*.

What would *eros* sublimated into *philia* look like? Let me suggest that we all like smooth running parishes, parishes where there aren't major conflicts, parishes that are active, even exciting. What are the parishes we are happy to serve? Parishes where only one in four bothers to worship with us, one in ten studies the Bible with us, one in twenty prays with us? For this we are complimented by our bishops, complimented by our fellow pastors, complimented by our laity, complimented by our families. We soak it all in because it appeals to our *eros* sublimated into *philia*.

I am one of those pastors. You know what that means. You know I am a shallow pastor. Is it any wonder why we serve in a shallow church? I want a calm and quiet parish, one that runs as smoothly as a well oiled machine even if it means only one if for come, only one in ten work, only one in ten pray with me. May God have mercy!

Only *agape* love builds the Church! Only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit builds the church. We know this is true. We have known it is true for a long time. St. Ambrosiaster said the center of this text is not in the first verse about knowledge, but in the sixth verse where it says everything belongs to God and we exist for Him. Do we hear this? Everything belongs to God and we exist for HIM.

Even this accuses us.

I have a homework assignment, catechism class. When we go home, we need to teach our people to love our Triune God more than anything else, before our families, before our work, before our reputations, before our wealth, before everything. But in order to teach our members, we need to love our Triune God ourselves, more than anything else.

Our failure to love Father, Son and Holy Spirit is why we are shallow pastors. Let the Holy Spirit lead us into this *agape* love! Let the Holy Spirit reach into us through our prayers and worship. This is the reason why prayer is the first rule of this society. Right now the Holy Spirit is reaching out to us through prayer and this meditation, leading us to fall deeply in love with Jesus.

Because everything belongs to God, and we exist for Him. Thanks be to God! Amen.

