

Homily
The Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas
Friday, December 22, 2023

“Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.”

Today’s first reading is a real slap in my face. Every time I realize that I’ve broken one or more of God’s commandments, I realize how hypocritical I am. First, I do and say things I shouldn’t and I don’t do and don’t say things I should. And to make matters worse, I see someone else doing or not doing what I wouldn’t do or would do, and judge them harshly for their wrongdoing, based on my judgment of them.

John is telling us, in a loving but direct way, that Jesus is here, the light of the world, lighting the way. Yet, we still sometimes hide in the darkness. We may say we know Him and follow Him, yet do we? Do we really know Him and follow Him? Do we really love our brothers and our sisters, all of them, not just the nice ones?

We are all imperfect people loved by a perfect God. And this perfect God knows well all our imperfections. Yet He loves us anyway, just as we are. When I focus on my brothers and sisters faults, which is so easy to do, especially when they are right in front of me, and I judge them by their actions, I am taking the place of God, Who is the Just Judge.

When we focus on God, we stand in His light and can see clearly. What we see is His love for all of us, each of us with all our imperfections.

When we take our focus off of God and look away from the light, we are blinded in the darkness. And what we do see is often a reflection of ourselves. How often do I judge in others what I myself am guilty of.

It is this season of Christmas when we embrace the true light, the Word Incarnate, when we put aside our judgements, lay down our hypocrisy, love one another just as God loves us. And we hold on to this light beyond this season, day by day, moment by moment, strengthened by God’s loving presence, shining a light in our lives, driving away the darkness.

When we feel that hypocrisy creeping in, that darkness flowing towards us, we refocus on the light, Christ, whose light is never-ending, whose love perfect. We embrace that which Jesus gives us, the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation to return to grace, and the Eucharist to be nourished and strengthened.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “I do not reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It is just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ.” It is time to be like Christ. It is time to focus on Christ. It is time to let the light of Christ shine in our lives always. It is time to be sincere and honest about ourselves and look inside and dispel the darkness. And, most importantly, it is time to shine that light towards our brother and sisters, just as Christ calls us to.