

20 TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR A
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HOLY NAME OF JESUS CHURCH
STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT

Rev. Msgr. J. James Cuneo

CHARLOTTESVILLE: OUTRAGE VS. HUMANITY

Today our three readings from Scripture each presents a certain message repeated: God intends the human race to be united in love with God and among one another. In spite of differences among peoples God wills to draw us together into the house of God.

FROM PROPHET ISAIAH we hear: “Thus says the Lord: Observe what is right ... my salvation is about to come. The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord ... loving the name of the Lord ... them I will bring to my holy mountain; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” God intends unity among all peoples.

IN THE LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO ROMANS he laments that some Jews have not accepted Jesus as Messiah, whereas many foreigners or pagans have come to believe in Jesus. Paul hopes and prays Christians and Jews of all nations would someday be blessed in unity of faith and love in God.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW today presents the episode in which a Canaanite woman approaches Jesus asking him to release her daughter from possession by a demon. At first Jesus ignores her. She repeats her request and Jesus denies her on the basis that his role is to minister to the Jewish people, whereas this woman is a pagan, a Canaanite, therefore enemy of Israel. Yet, when Jesus recognizes the woman’s strong faith in him as Savior, he reaches out and delivers the young girl from the demon. Thus Jesus acknowledges the Father’s will to unite all peoples before the one God. (Perhaps in this scene we could interpret Jesus was using the dialog in front of others precisely to teach a lesson to those around him, such as his disciples and also the lawyers or Pharisees, that denying the love of God to other peoples (... different races, strangers, pagans ...) contradicts God’s purpose toward humanity.)

God draws all people to himself. That message echoes throughout the Word of God. In light of these readings from the Mass we may reflect a bit on last week's violence in Charlottesville.

Last week an edition of the *Connecticut Post* printed a short piece written by State Senator Tony Hwang entitled "We Will Not Allow Hate to Win":

"The events that took place in Charlottesville this past weekend were, first and foremost, reprehensible, evil and horrifying. Hate cannot and will not be tolerated by the American people. Our society is built on the very difference that cowards and bigots seek to exploit, magnify and demonize.... Now is the time to come together to mourn the life lost and to grow stronger together from it. Now is the time for those who represent the American people to be unwavering in our condemnation of violence, extremism and bigotry ... As state senator I condemn the hate-based violence in Virginia, and around the country; and I denounce any legitimacy or recognition of white-supremacist and neo-Nazi groups, and any people who promote violence, terror and hate ... I encourage everyone to understand that the threat of violence and intolerance is not a partisan issue and should not be discussed in a political context. This is about our fundamental shared values as Americans that all people are created equal and all people deserve respect."

HATRED AMONG PEOPLE VIOLATES GOD'S WILL FOR UNITY.

According to Catholic Faith, for example as summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hatred is a serious violation of the Fifth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." (I must admit that I did not realize moral theologians have categorized hatred precisely as sin against life.) Hatred involves a desire to destroy or put down or denigrate another human being. Bigotry can accompany or motivate hatred. Bigotry is hatred based on a prejudice that certain persons, who differ because of race, religion, social class, ethnic origin, etc., by that fact should enjoy little or no rights to our respect toward their life or well-being. Bigotry, hatred, desires to banish, reduce or destroy someone else, as if that person is less human than the rest of us. Hatred sins against life and humanity.

Now, we could also pay attention to a couple of distinctions: (1) Hatred is not the same thing as anger; and (2) hatred is not the same thing as deep-rooted philosophical differences or fierce political opposition.

Anger involves a human defense mechanism in reaction to an injury or damage committed or perceived as committed against us. Anger arouses the emotional urge and judgment that we must protect ourselves and right the wrongs, correct an unjust

situation. Hatred, on the other hand, does not seek justice or resolution; instead it simply desires or seeks evil upon other persons to the point of eliminating them in one way or another, diminishing their presence or their existence before us. Hatred is always immoral.

We should also recognize a distinction between hatred and deep-rooted disagreement or opposition to others' opinions, decisions or politics. For years we have complained about the stubborn lack of compromise between Republicans and Democrats in Congress or State Legislature. We speak of right wing and left-wing or far left and far right. The opposition certainly frustrates necessary progress and resolution of needs. This is not at all the same negative, sinful energy or behavior of hatred. White-supremacy groups, neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan cannot be compared or associated with conservative or right wing politics. Those groups hate other people as blacks, immigrants, foreigners, Jews, Catholics, gays. They have a long history of physical attacks against blacks in our country: lynching, threats, segregation, court trials rigged against them. Their purpose is to destroy non-whites, restrict their rights, their dignity, their humanity, their life.

When people try to equate neo-Nazis with Black Lives Matter or with groups protesting the deportation of millions of immigrants who have lived and worked peacefully and productively for years in America, when they try to equate those protests with white supremacy or Ku Klux Klan or Nazism regarding blame for violence or disturbance in Charlottesville, that is a disgraceful argument. How could there be any toleration or exoneration or minimizing of Nazism's hatred? Seventy years after the end of World War II, we still relive in memory and in emotions that history of Nazism, the atrocities against millions of Jews and other peoples in Europe in the name of supremacy over other humans. This is hatred not politics or anger. The other day a news item mentioned there are few American veterans still living who fought against Nazism in Europe. Sixteen million Americans were sent to Europe and fought in that war to liberate nations from evil. We cannot tolerate or try to legitimize hatred or hateful behavior against other. It is true Americans enjoy freedom of speech, which often protects disgraceful messages and publications. It is difficult to prevent free speech. But hatred in any form remains always ethically, morally, philosophically evil against humanity and against God. We should never tolerate or legitimize nor engage in hatred or hateful behavior against anyone.

From the Scripture readings of today Mass and from Jesus we know humanity survives only from the God's Law with the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. "Love your neighbor as yourselves ... love your enemies ... do good to others ... and love God with your whole heart and soul ..." That is salvation and redemption of humanity. God says, "**My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.**"