

World Wide Communion

I have preached on “The Great Commission” more than once. But I think I will never exhaust it. And even this word today...will not go to the heart of the commission itself...but rather use it as the foundation....upon which our sacrament, the Holy Supper of Jesus, is based.

Listen, for how Jesus leaves us this Word, His last...lasting...word. Reading from Matthew 28, 16 through 20. This...is the Great Commission!

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”^[a]

Amen.

Carlo Caretto...is a very well known, Christian author, a writer of devotional literature. He is, I think, a Catholic. And like all of us he too struggles with the petty little things of being human, things like getting along with others. He writes a story of his frustration with God’s word in the prophet Ezekiel, where our Creator says, “I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it.. with a natural heart...” (11:19)

“But”, Caretto says, “I’m still waiting, still asking myself when and how this will happen.

He tells a story.... “In our community the other day there wasn’t much coffee. Coffee does me good down here in the desert. It helps me; I am old. (Brother Caretto is an ascetic, I believe; like a monk in a desert monastery*.....devoting most of his life to silent prayer and Bible Study.) “I was worried about not having any, about spending a few hours feeling dull and weak and so, without perceiving the evil I was doing, I went into the kitchen before the others and drank up all that was left. Afterwards, having suffered all day and made my confession, I thought in

shame of my selfishness, of the ease with which I had excluded my two brothers from those black, bitter remains.

It seems a tiny thing, yet in that cup of coffee, taken...and not shared with my brothers, is the root of all the evil which disturbs us, the poison of all the arrogance which selfishness, riches, and power create. The difference between me and Jesus is right here, in an affair that seems simple...but isn't at all. After a whole lifetime it is still there to make you think. Jesus would have left the coffee for his brothers; I...excluded my brothers. No, it isn't easy to live with hearts like ours: let us confess it. (*an RC layman, into the Sahara at 44)

There it is! The human condition...in an empty coffee cup.

Simple...and well said. And we're just like Brother Caretto aren't we? We may not think so. "Hey, I'm macho. That's not me. I'm not a *sissy Christian*, feeling guilty over a lousy cup o' coffee."

Or maybe Caretto's world seems a universe away from yours of a latte with the ladies at the mall, or me...grudgingly driving on...up Normal Avenue...passing Scooters...when the line is too long.... It may seem far removed from our life..but it's not. Not really. Human greed, the desire to have something for our own...is in every one of us. Watch for it. Most of us....here...in this room...can point it out in each other. (Uh – oh! ☹)

I don't know how many times and in how many places the Bible talks about getting along with other people...but it's got to be multitudes. Verily...verily I say to you....it is more times than the grains of sand on the beach... God urges us to: lay down our life for a friend, to befriend the homeless, to honor our mother and father... But we don't. We don't do it.

What the world needs now is love. What the world needs more than anything is love, God's kind of love. What we really need...is God's agape love.

....Have you seen those segments on the subject of "Children of War"? On TV, then in the magazines. I'd come across it before...in years past. But for awhile it was everywhere. And it got my attention. I too am alarmed...at the evidence!

You've probably seen it: little kids with grenades in Vietnam. A thirteen year old boy with a rifle in the jungles of Nicaragua...palm leaves swaying behind him. Sweat stained, dark little body glistening under the soldier's helmet as he talks without feeling to the camera about his latest killings for the resistance.

But the one that got me most I think was the interview with the kids of Ireland. Catholic and Protestant kids were taken to the same summer camp...to try to change their futures before their parents and environment made it too late. It was obvious it was parents handing down hate from one generation to the next. They were spouting vulgar, bitter hatred...in words no one would ever say in church. What were Catholics good for (if you asked a Protestant kid)? Well, to be beaten and stabbed and left for dead of course. *"They're slime!"* (I heard that in Scotland during seminary. My room mate, a 17 year old farm boy from Paisley, a Brethren! Church of the Brethren, pacifist.. mind you!...told me he would kill the Pope if he could...and that all Roman Catholics are going to hell.)

And this...from children?! Sometimes seven and eight years old! They're too young to even feel the vile emotions of their parents...but they know the words, and they *have felt the emotional power*...of such vitriolic vulgarities; they have them down cold.

~ ~What the world needs now is to let go...of hate like that. And greed and selfishness...and put downs. What we need do is get along with each other - - to break these stupid, human traits of homicide, genocide, and imbellicide...that lead only to humanity's ..suicide.

What the worlds needs now....is Jesus.

He...is Lord of all, both Catholics and Protestants! We need Jesus, the Love of God... We need listen to his calming voice calling, *"Come, let us reason together."* We need to follow him...like sheep...who before our shearer...keep silence. Because we are so in awe...of Him...laying down his life..for friends: Catholic, Hindu, Unitarian, Muslim, New Age novice...all of us.

Because He does it...all the time, calling us to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to forgive....to come together.

And - - what better – way...than to sit down...and eat together. (*indicate communion table*) To break bread - together. To share with Him a banquet feast at which He is Head of the Table.

(Well...) In Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh...there is a plaque. It is in the sanctuary, sunk deep into the polished marble floor of that golden domed altar. (It is right – over – there. Right behind this communion table, underneath the real gold mosaic tile 'apse'...) It is dark a burnished bronze plaque....small amongst the vast, voluminous sanctuary soaring eighty feet above in scores of globular

dones of carved granite. It's one of those sanctuaries which *smells* rich: the sweet perfume of polishing oil from the gleaming wooden pews, the deep, luxuriant carpet softening sounds of a service.

And the plaque commemorates the historical fact, the significant event of World Wide Communion...which was first begun in that church, ...upon that very spot....in 1933. (Hugh Thompson Kerr Sr. Pastor)

It is a good thing. A grand idea. A wonderful invitation. For the world to sit down together...and commune with each other.

To turn swords into plowshares....and harvest peace together. To feast on its fruits. To *dine together*...for a change; the Body of Christ...come to full fruit.

And Jesus...is the Lord of *this* table.

So - lift the bread high, high like up on a mountain...where He gave his word to Moses. Lift the wheat, the seed of his body high... like it was lifted up ...on a cross in the wilderness.. And lift too the cup, higher than anything...that at His name.... that, at his blood...all will kneel in reverence and proclaim...this, ***this...is the way to Heaven***, to lay down your life for others.

Come beloved, to this table. Come - in harmony. Come ~ ~ in the hope that all should come in peace. Come, beloved, in the name of Christ...who calls...to east and west..to north and south...who summons us all....to

World...

Wide....

Communion.

Amen.