Nov. 5, 2017

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10
1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13
Mt 23:1-12

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What Christ dreaded more than anything was hypocrisy or not practicing what you preach. He had harsh words for the Pharisees who practiced hypocrisy. He called them “Whited sepulchres” because of their hypocrisy. We recently went to protest the NRA being in Milwaukee for a three day conference. They were selling clothing for concealed carry and offering insurance to those who shoot another person so they do not suffer consequences. We were asking them not to make it easier for people to get a gun and hide the gun, and not to continue to tell the public that it is alright to maim or kill in order to protect themselves and their families. What was surprising is that more Christians were not present to join the demonstration. By being silent around the NRA Christians are condoning the public having guns and using them on people whom they consider to be their enemies.

We are to preach the Gospel of nonviolent love, but many Christians say they are following Christ’s command, but their actions do not show that. In today’s Gospel Christ tells his disciples to beware of those who do not practice what they preach. We must show Christ to others by our actions. If we love our enemies and do good to those who do evil to us as Christ taught, we cannot say it is alright for a Christian to do violence. The gun’s common purpose and its reason for being manufactured is to do violence to another by threatening, scaring, even maiming and killing another. We forget Christ’s statement to Peter when Peter tried to defend Christ by cutting the ear off of the soldier who came to arrest Jesus, to put away the sword.

Can you imagine Christ picking up a weapon and using it to do violence to another? Would Christ shoot someone who is trying to steal from Him? Would Christ shoot someone who is threatening his family? Would Christ form an army to protect Him and His friends? No, because then He would be a hypocrite since he preached loving one’s enemies and doing good to those who do all manner of evil against you. If Christ wanted to use a weapon to defend ourselves he would have taught it. He said our only weapon is love. Yet many people who identify as Christians feel it is alright to pick up a weapon to do violence to another. For them, it seems earthly life is more important than eternal life. As a result of Christian hypocrisy on guns, an average of 36 people are shot to death in the U.S. each and every day.

Christ said the Pharisees tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders. We read in Paul’s letter that we must remember that he with unspiring energy worked night and day so as not to be a burden on anyone while proclaiming the gospel of God. We are to lighten, not increase, the burden on people. Instead, many times we burden people with our
weapons, destroying lives and the means to live. We are at war right now in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, and Somalia with no end in sight. Think of the terrible burden this is on everyone there. We continue to use our funds to make more and more weapons for the purpose of burdening those considered enemies of the country. Peace does not come at the barrel of a gun. Peace comes only when we do good to those who harm us and make our enemies into friends. Let us not be hypocrites, but lay down our weapons and start to speak up for peace and justice in the world. Then we'll more truly be following Christ.