

“The children of this world are more prudent ...than are the children of light.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a priest was giving a retreat to inmates in a federal prison. One of the talks dealt with Jesus’ teaching on revenge. Jesus said:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, ‘Offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.’ ” ^{Mt. 5:38-39}

To illustrate Jesus’ point, the priest told the story of Jackie Robinson, the 1st black athlete to play major-league baseball. When Branch Rickey signed Jackie to the Dodgers in 1945, he told him:

“You will have to take everything they dish-out to you ...and never strike back.”

Rickey was right.

On the field, pitchers brushed Jackie back with blazing fastballs. Opposing fans & teams taunted him. Off the field, he was thrown out of hotels and restaurants where the rest of the team stayed and ate.

Through it all, Jackie kept his cool. He **“turned the other cheek.”** And so did Branch Rickey, who was abused by people for ‘signing’ Jackie to begin with.

The priest ended the story by asking the prisoners this question:

“Where do you think black athletes would be today had Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey NOT... ‘turned the other cheek?’ ”

After the talk, a prisoner said to the priest:

“That’s a nice story, Father. But, why didn’t you tell the whole story? Why didn’t you tell WHY Rickey & Robinson ‘turned the other cheek?’ It wasn’t for the love of God. It was for the love of money!”

The priest thought for a minute:

“If the prisoner were right, then he just shot my story right out of the water. BUT... on the other hand, if the prisoner were right, then my story is all the more valid because it makes an even more important point that Jesus makes.”

He’s talking about the point Jesus makes in today’s Gospel, which I/Deacon Vic just read to you from St. Luke. What, exactly, is the point Jesus makes in today’s Gospel, you ask?

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

Jesus says: **“The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation --than are the children of the light.”**

Or to put it more simply:

“Worldly people work harder for worldly rewards—that last a few years, than Christians -- Catholics in our case, work for heavenly rewards—that last forever.”

In other words, if the prisoner were right, then Rickey & Robinson were more willing to ‘turn the other cheek’ for the sake of money than you & I are willing to do it for God. This is, in fact, the very point Jesus is making in the Gospel. Is it any wonder we seem to be living in a godless society?

Regardless, this raises a most poignant question:

WHY are worldly people more willing to sacrifice for worldly rewards than we are for heavenly ones?

For example, WHY are we more willing to treat relative strangers kindly ...for financial gains at work...than we are our own family at home... for heavenly gains? THAT’S a highly personal question! We, each, must answer it for ourselves ...perhaps in the quiet of our Communion-time today, when we are ‘one’ with Jesus.

So-o, to sum up, the message of today’s Gospel asks this:

Are we like the Christians, ‘Children of the Light,’ whom Jesus talks about today?

Specifically:

Are we less willing to sacrifice for heavenly reward than we are for earthly reward?

Specifically:

Are we less willing to sacrifice for the spread of the Gospel-message of Jesus —than we are for our own, worldly advancement?

If it seems we are:

Then we will want to pray the following, closing prayer with special devotion:

“Lord, open our ears to your word, even when we would rather not listen to it —because it challenges us more than we want to be challenged.

Lord, open our minds to your word, even when we’d rather not think about it —because it disturbs us more than we want to be disturbed.

Lord, help us to put your word into practice, even when we’d rather not act upon it —because it means changing what we’d rather not change.

**Above all, Lord,
help us realize that you never ask us to do anything for which you won’t bless us
far beyond our wildest dreams
...for you are never outdone in generosity!”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.