

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – OCTOBER 14, 2018

Dear Families and Parishioners,

Most product producing companies have two important arms. One arm is the **manufacturing unit**. It is geared to give a consistent product. The consistent product captures the user because the user can depend upon the product.

The product producing company has a second arm which might be described as the **research arm**. This arm is constantly looking how to improve the product so that in this changing world, the product does not become obsolete but rather grows and becomes better.

Those two arms of the company almost seem contradictory. The one tries for consistency while the other one moves toward change and advancement. The consistency is clearly good but the advancement is clearly necessary if the company wants to remain in business.

The gospel story today reflects those two positions. A young man comes to Jesus, the Teacher. This young man is clearly following the Torah and Jesus looks upon him and loves him. Then Jesus moves from consistency to advancement. If you want to grow better, sell your possessions, give them to the poor, and come follow me. Unfortunately the lad could not take this step at this time.

Pope Francis in his exhortation **Rejoice and Be Glad** speaks perceptively on the way this incident touches our life. “Grace acts **in history**. Ordinarily it takes hold of us and transforms us **progressively**.” #50. We have all been given the young man’s Torah in our Christian Faith. However, the Christian Faith has to grow in us lest it become an obsolete product. The faith that comes to us must grow through acts of faith so that we may be transformed **progressively**.

Those acts of faith for most people lie principally in fidelity to the sacraments. The sacraments are not merely sterile signs but rather our individually bonding with Jesus and in the Sacrament of Confirmation with the Holy Spirit. People who abandon or do not practice the sacraments are not bad but rather they resemble the young man of the gospel whose “face fell” and walked away because the cares of the transitory world were too enticing and engrossing. At this point in his life grace could not transform him progressively.

Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

Last week and this week we are reading the short letter of Paul to the Galatians. This letter is bristling with emotions. Paul had brought the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Gentiles in this central part of what is now Turkey. After he left, some converts but very strict observers of Jewish law came and told them to disregard Paul because he was not one of the original apostles and his message was incorrect. Their message was that you must become Jewish and observe the laws of the Torah in order to become Christian.

Paul was very angry since his message to the Gentiles was already approved by the Council in Jerusalem. Paul reminds the Gentile people that their knowledge of Jesus did not come through obedience to the Laws of the Torah but rather by the free Grace of God who gave them Faith. Faith makes you free from the Laws of the Torah, circumcision, and dietary prescriptions. Christian prescription is to love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves. That prescription from the Spirit makes us free from the laws of the Torah.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.
October 14, 2018