



Dear friends of God,

This last week I was struggling with a temporary crown that was falling out. I was beginning to feel like a leper losing body parts and wanted to yell unclean, unclean. It was a struggle to preach and preside on Sunday. I wanted to share my homily notes to share what I was attempting to say during the homily.

Many say that our social teaching is the most misunderstood part of our Catholic Christian Tradition. It is an important and special part of the life that we are called to live as Roman Catholics.

It is a reminder of who we understand ourselves to be as it says in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

This document from 1965 is certainly a gift of the Holy Spirit. Even in the first lines it reminds us that we as Catholics are called to live an engaged life in the world caring for our brothers and sisters in the world.

The following are my notes for my homily. Take it for what it is worth: homilies are meant to be live events and like each of us are always a work in progress.

Deacon John ministered in Gratiot County with me when I was first made a pastor.

He was a wise man full of deep compassion and understanding.

He often spoke of our lives as more than a waiting room for heaven.

He was right.

So often we think of two parts of our lives. Our living life then we die and **“We go to heaven.”**

Our misunderstanding of our own faith can lead to that conclusion pretty quickly.

We can even hear it in our second reading today from St. Paul: “You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit...”

We don't realize that St. Paul didn't mean that we are spirits enfleshed for a period of time before we are "set free."

That is actually a heresy known as Gnosticism.

For St. Paul life in the flesh was a bit of a metaphor for a life prone to sin. That is a life where we neglect to love God, neighbor and our earthly home.

As Christians we believe that at a time of God's own choosing heaven and earth will become one again.

In the letter to the Ephesians Paul says that God has an agenda that **"...in Christ, in the fullness of time, to bring all things into one in him in the heavens and on the earth."**

Since the Resurrection of Jesus (and remember that he had a body after his resurrection with his wounds and all) we are called to participate in God's re-creation of the earth into a heavenly place where we care for one another as God's children as our brothers and sisters and to care for the earth as our common home as Pope Francis reminds us.

The Brazilian Theologian Leonardo Boff offers us an important insight: He recently said that **"Today humanity's problem isn't economic, political, cultural or religious, but a lack of solidarity."**

"The Catholic social teaching principle of Solidarity is about recognizing others as our brothers and sisters and actively working for their good. In our connected humanity, we are invited to build relationships to understand what life is like for others who are different from us."  
(<https://caritas.org.nz/catholic-social-teaching/solidarity>)

In living a life of solidarity we walk with each other in the kingdom of God.

Solidarity is realizing that life is more than waiting for heaven.

It is living like Christ who said: **"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."**

It is beginning to live heaven on earth.

And God knows that now we need heaven on earth more than ever.

Much love,

