

Morning Prayer A

Homily

"Shema Yishra-el,

Hear, O Israel:

The LORD our God is one LORD."

These are the words said lovingly by an observant Jew in every important moment of life, in every prayer prayed, and (if it may be so) at the hour of death. These words are written on bits of parchment, worn in little boxes on the hand and the forehead, and nailed to the doorposts of their homes.

This is the God who revealed Himself to them, claimed them for His own, who led them out of slavery, and led them through their whole history. This is the God who revealed Himself to us, who, in His infinite love sent His Son for our redemption, who delivered us from slavery to sin, who will lead us through this life, and into eternity.

This is the God of whom we are commanded:

"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,"

Words we hear in every Prayer Book Eucharist. We hear them, we repeat them, but we so seldom actually obey them.

There are so many things that get our attention, that distract us from the things of God, that steal our love from Him, capture our hearts and souls, and direct our energies to serve something else.

That is known as sin.

The words of Our God are to be heard, to be lived and to be taught, not only on Sundays and other religious occasions, not only in the church, but in our daily lives, every day, when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise up., in everything we do.

This is not a message for Lent alone, but Lent is a time for taking inventory, to see how our love for God is being expressed -- or denied -- by the way that we live.

St. Paul carries this thought just a bit further, in a way particularly appropriate to us Anglicans. We like to pride ourselves on being a bit more educated than others, a bit more dignified. As Catholic Christians we hold to a deeper understanding of certain mysteries. In many respects all of this is true. We are Anglicans because we believe that to be so.

However, we need to hear St. Paul's biting words, and, each of us, to take them personally.

I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

What is he saying to us?

Is he telling us, perhaps, that all our 'extra knowledge,' all our theological and liturgical sophistication, is not what it takes to make us good Christians? He tells the Corinthians, and perhaps us, that they are not ready for the deeper stuff. Why? Because, where it really matters, they just didn't get it, and perhaps we don't either.

That church was badly divided. There was constant bickering over who was right. Everyone seemed to be more concerned to have someone to oppose, than to commit their lives to the Lord. Have you noticed how much easier it is to identify an enemy than to face the enemy within ourselves? We are so good at finding others to reject that we forget to look inside. We are, as Jesus said, so busy criticizing the specks in another's eye, that we don't notice the log in our own.

"the wisdom of this world," continues the Apostle, "is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men."

It's not who I am, what I do, how much I know, that matters, but that I am a sinner and I need help, just as much as the one I'm squabbling with.

"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,"

When we get that right, then we know how to use the riches we have been given, and to share them.

Let us pray.

Let our eyes be upon thee, O Lord.

Let our hearts overflow with thy love.

Let our lives show thy presence.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
