Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time: 7/2/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 9:30 AM

Those of you who receive my parish-wide emails know how often I refer to “This Day in History” in them, an email that I receive daily from the History Channel. The episode of “This Day in History” for last Sunday was especially dark and depressing. Last Sunday, June 25, was the anniversary of Battle of the Little Bighorn, the defeat and killing of George Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, in 1876. Last Sunday was the beginning of the Korean War in 1950 in which nearly five million people would die. Last Sunday was the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia killing nineteen US airmen in 1996. Last Sunday was the anniversary of Congress passing the Mann Act aimed at curbing sex trafficking in 1910. There was even an item noting that Last Sunday was the anniversary of General Dwight Eisenhower taking command of Allied Forces in Europe in 1942, bringing to mind again whole horror of World War 2 in which estimates say that as many as fifty to sixty million people died. As if all of these history facts weren’t dark and depressing enough, it was even darker and more depressing if one looked at the news items that day in the Post-Dispatch: the ongoing story of the guns and teenaged shooting downtown the week before, the ongoing antipathy and arguing over the US Supreme Court’s decision a year ago about abortion, and the ongoing acrimony and division over all sorts of other issues of the day. Looking at all of that, the only word that came to my mind that day was the word “Wretched” and how “Wretched” we humans can be at times and, in fact, often times are.

The counter balance to all of that bad stuff last Sunday was something that also appeared in last Sunday’s emails: a quote from Dynamic Catholic from Allen Hunt, an associate of Matthew Kelly, who wrote, ***“Remarkably, the Lord made you in His very own image. That means your life is sacred. It has value. You have been made by love and with love. It is hard to believe, but you look a lot like God.”*** Tied to these words from Allen Hunt are the words today from St. Paul in Romans: ***Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.*** While the word “Wretched” popped into my mind last Sunday in thinking about all of that bad stuff, what also popped into my mind in light of those words from Allen Hunt and from St. Paul was the word “Wonderful” in that, in our God, we have been wonderfully made and how our God calls us and enables us to do “Wonderful” things. What also struck me last Sunday is that our call from God as Catholic Christians is to do our best to turn this “Wretched” world into a world that is “Wonderful.” But how can we do that?

The first step in trying to turn our “Wretched” world into one that is “Wonderful” is for all of us to be “Wonder-filled” at God’s love for us. To be very honest, we all have moments when we are “Wretched,” arguing with each other, being selfish, treating each other harshly, being impatient with each other, failing to listen, calling each other names or worse—we all can be a “Wretched” lot at times. Yet despite how “Wretched” we all can be, our God still loves us. As Allen Hunt says, God has made us in His very own image, meaning that our lives are sacred, that our lives have value, and that we have been made by love and with love so that we might be God’s love in the world. Yet does that realization fill us with wonder? It must if we are to bring that same love to our world. If the first step in trying to turn our “Wretched” world into one that is “Wonderful” is for all of us to be “Wonder-filled” at God’s love for us, the second step is for us to help our fellow “Wretched” inhabitants of this world to realize that they too have been made in God’s very own image, that their lives are sacred, that their lives have value, and that they have been made by love and with love so that they too might be able bring God’s love to the world. The only way that they will come to believe that is if we treat them in that way.

Let us not be afraid to admit how “Wretched” we all can be at times, but let us also take the time to be “Wonder-filled” at the fact that, despite our “Wretchedness,” our God still loves us in a “Wonderful” way. And if we do take that time be “Wonder-filled” at God’s love for us, then maybe, little bit by little bit, those other “Wretched” folks might learn to be “Wonder-filled” as well at God’s love for them so that together we all, with God’s help, can work to turn our “Wretched” world into one that is “Wonderful.”