**15th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

What is the greatest power in the world? Is it the military with all the technologically advanced weapons? Can such power truly change the world? Maybe it can force people into submission, or can temporarily control nations, but can it change the evil hearts of people?

Two years ago was a conference in England and the theme of the conference was “Problems of Development and Need Throughout the World.” This conference gathered World Religious Leaders .These leaders discussed the tragic problems of the world:

-          ***5 billion people live in the developing world, of which, 3 billion live on less than $2 per day***

-          ***2 billion people have no access to electricity***

-          ***52 million babies are killed in their mother’s womb through abortions every year*** and we can continue this statistics.

In this situation we are tempted to think that these problems are too big, and that nothing, or no one, can really make a difference.

Such statistics reflect the evil in the world – the evil in the hearts of people. People create unjust situations, take advantage of others, and then show indifference to their suffering.

Because these statistics are so mind-boggling, many people have adopted a closed mentality where they focus only on themselves and their own problems. They create a little world where they become the center, and everyone else is outside. This attitude of self-centered individualism is the new ideology of the modern world.

***One Russian writer said “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties -- but right through every human heart -- and through all human hearts.”***

But what can change the evil within man? Surely the greatest military might in the world can do little to change the evil with the hearts of people. There must be something greater.

**The power of love which gives hope to others. The power of love which forgives the greatest evil. The power of love which can recreate people!**

**“We all need to ask ourselves the most important question in life. Why are we here? What does God seek from our lives during this short time on earth?”**

The answer is love! We are called to be loved, and to love! To recognize our identity as God’s beloved children, and then share that love with others. This unconditional, sacrificial, divine love opens up an unending wellspring of power within our lives.

There is a story of a holy man who was saying his morning prayers under a tree whose roots stretched out over a river bank.  During his prayers he noticed that the river was rising and a scorpion caught in the roots was about to drown.  So the holy man reached down to try and free the scorpion.  But each time the man tried to help the scorpion, the scorpion responded by trying to sting the man.  An observer came along and said to the holy man, “Don’t you know that creature is a scorpion, and the nature of a scorpion is to sting?”  To which the holy man replied, “That may be true, but don’t you know that I am a Christian, and the nature of a child of God is to save.  **Why should I change my nature simply because the scorpion does not change its nature?”**

***For example, whenever we come across a person who wishes us evil, we must ask ourselves, “Why should we let his actions and feelings control our own actions and feelings?”  If he wants to be angry and say evil things about us and hate us, we shouldn’t let that change the way we feel.  If we get angry with someone who is angry, his anger will simply increase.  If we hate someone who hates us, his hatred will simply increase.  But, if we respond to anger with peace; if we respond to hatred with love; if we respond to offense with mercy, then there is hope to transform our enemy into our friend.  We will begin to cultivate God’s divine love in our heart.***

However, such divine love is not easy to obtain.  The truth is, it is difficult to love those who hate us, to forgive those who hurt us, or to have mercy on those who offend us.

**But God is ready to give us this love.** We receive the ability to love only through the grace that comes from Christ! He can help us overcome anger, bitterness, hatred, and evil so that they no longer have any control over our lives. Through divine love, we will find the freedom to discover our true nature – our identity as God’s beloved children.

**One day, a holy man asked his disciples, “When do you know that the night has ended and the day has begun?” One student answered, “When you look in the distance and can distinguish between a fig tree and a palm tree.” Another said, “When you look in the distance and can distinguish between a dog and a sheep.” And others gave different such answers. But the holy father rejected each of these. Finally, his students asked, “When do we know that the night has ended and the day has begun?” And the holy man answered, “When we look in the distance, and see no difference between our enemy and our friend – we look at both each and every person with love, then we know that the night has ended and the day has begun.”**

**This is the power that can make a difference. This is the love that can change the world!**