

Choosing to live that “straightforward and unsophisticated understanding of right and wrong”

Welcome to the Ordinary Times! The first reading is taken from Genesis. Let me give you a touch of context. Adam was walking around the Garden of Eden feeling very lonely, so God asked Adam, "What's wrong with you?"

Adam said he didn't have anyone to talk to. God said he was going to give him a companion and it would be a woman. He said, "This person will cook for you and wash your clothes. She will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear you children and never ask you to get up in the night to take care of them. When you are watching your favorite show, she will never come close to the remote control. She will not nag, and will be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will freely give you love and compassion whenever needed."

Adam asked God, "What will a woman like this cost?" God said, "An arm and a leg." Adam said, "Tell me God. What can I get for just a rib?" The rest is history.

Adam and Eve lived in the intimacy of the Garden of Eden, where they were so happy to hear the footsteps of God. God told them not to eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden.

Of course, they ate the fruit.

And then, everything changed. The very noise of God's voice became intimidating. They hid from God. But God does not give up on man. He comes in search of Adam.

He calls out, "Adam, where are you?" Adam answers in a truly disgraceful way: "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and so I hid myself." Adam's answer is just another evasion.

He does not admit to eating the forbidden fruit, only to being afraid of appearing before God naked. Something that had never troubled him before! After Adam's cowardly answer, God gives him yet another chance to confess and repent.

God asks Adam, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree whereof I commanded you that you should not eat?" Surely we could expect Adam to confess now. "The jig is up, God knows." But Adam still does not accept responsibility for his sin.

He answers God, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." This answer is even worse.

Confronted with direct evidence of his sin, Adam indirectly blames God for giving him the woman, and directly blames Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit to eat. Adam seems incapable of accepting responsibility for his actions.

He insists on portraying himself as a victim of choices made by others rather than as a guilty party who has made bad choices for himself as the result of his own free will.

Unfortunately, Adam would have fit right into our world today. Ours is an age filled with Adams. Come to think of it, we are becoming a nation of victims.

Each of us is armed to the teeth with reasons why what we did was simply not our fault. We have created a culture in our nation, where it is unbelievably easy to evade responsibility for anything we do.

It is not that there are no real victims in this society; it is that there are so many perpetrators claiming to be victims that the real victims are lost in the stampede of moral evasion that is degrading our society as we speak.

At the heart of Adam's self-deception, as well as our national addiction to the cult of victimhood, is the simple inability to feel shame. Shame is not embarrassment or humiliation or neurotic guilt—those debilitating emotions that do not generally lead to constructive change in our lives.

Shame is the basic moral feeling that we have done something very wrong, and ought to do something to make things right.

In *The Altruistic Personality*, the book about Christians who saved Jews during the Holocaust, Samuel and Pearl Oliner asked what distinguished the rescuers from the majority who did nothing, or were complicit.

Their conclusion was that they were not distinguished by educational level or by political views or even by attitudes towards Jews. They were, however, different in two critical respects: First, they were strongly connected to communities that had a straightforward and unsophisticated understanding of right and wrong, and they had a powerful sense of moral agency and shame.

The Christians said that they could not have lived with a decision other than saving their Jewish brothers and sisters.

It is so important for us here at CTK to become a community that respects truth, not defenders of lies and agents of deception. We must become a shining example of a community that has a straightforward and unsophisticated understanding of what is right and wrong.

For this to happen, to become an intentional community of truth, all of us must invest time and energy today to learn more about the teachings of Jesus and that of the Church.

You may or may not agree with me on an issue confronting our nation today, depending on your political affiliation. I would ask you set your politics aside for a moment.

Put on the mindset of faith, our church teaching as we confront this issue today.

In the context of the immigrant children being separated from their mothers and fathers, our Bishops have responded strongly.

You might say, we never heard it. I say we are so glued to our favorite talk show hosts that we hardly pay attention to what Church or the Gospel has to say.

Our Bishops have clearly responded to this issue: Family unity is a cornerstone of our American immigration system and a foundational element of Catholic teaching. 'Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward.' Children are not instruments of deterrence but a blessing from God.

Whether it is about abortion or children, or the needs of our poor and homeless, we must have an unambiguous understanding of right and wrong; we must be truthful. Otherwise, we will be swept along by the flow.

CTK must become the type of community that Jesus stood for.

That is why I would like to invite you to seriously consider joining for the upcoming two sessions of CTKalive this summer.

Of course, this is only a starting point in establishing a community here at CTK that is not eroded by political or social relativism. Yet, I believe it is a critical one.

CTKalive was built up on the three pillars: faith, prayer and catholic social teachings of the Church.

I have been to most of the sessions and I have witnessed contentious, passionate conversations with regard to social justice.

And that is beautiful, for we must let the light of our faith shed a light on our world view.

And you know what? In our culture of lies, deception and lack of compassion, it is paramount to educate ourselves in the Gospel.

200 of your fellow CTK parishioners have already completed the CTKalive program, and I invite you all to take that first step, and sign up today.

The question is, when the call comes to do what is right, even to the extent of pain or death, would you... would this CTK community have the courage of our convictions or the strength that comes from our faith to do what is right?

Will we choose to live that "straightforward and unsophisticated understanding of right and wrong?"