



Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

“We can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom. But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion. This, then, is my true religion, my simple faith. In this sense, there is no need for temple or church, for mosque or synagogue, no need for complicated philosophy, doctrine, or dogma. Our own heart, our own mind, is the temple. The doctrine is compassion. Love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are: ultimately these are all we need.” - Dalai Lama

Despite the best efforts of our religions, economic systems, and political platforms, we humans get lost. These things are the means by which we try to accomplish the end goals of peace, security, and providing the basic needs to everyone. But too often we get lost and confused, and we end up defending the “means,” and forgetting or sacrificing the goals we wanted to accomplish. So we defend the free enterprise economic system, while we write off those who cannot participate and must do without basic needs. Or we ignore the other political party and end up in gridlock because our party is in the majority. Or, as is happening in the Middle East, we demonize and persecute another religion or culture because ours is the “right” one.

This quote from the Dalai Lama calls us back to the roots and foundation of what we were created for in the first place. Jesus offered the same message, often placing forgiveness and compassion above the religious or civil law.

Advent is a good time to reassess and take stock of our priorities, and get back to basics. It is a time to discern whether or not our religion, economics, politics, and social institutions are in line with the primary goal of love, compassion, and respect for everyone. And if not, to take steps on a personal and communal level, to make them more effective in reaching the primary goal.

Peace,

Fr. Garry