

January 30, 2021

Letter to the City of the Lord Az. Branch, from Az. Branch Senior Coordinator, Jeff Looker.

Brothers and Sisters:

It doesn't take a voracious consumer of news to know that we are a divided nation in need of unity. The concepts of "unity" and "division" unfortunately have a variety of meanings, depending on who you ask. There appears to be great division on the topic of unity! 😊

Satan hates unity. Ever since his fall from Heaven, Satan has sought to divide the world. His first action was to divide the angels, followed famously by tempting Adam and Eve to original sin in the garden, dividing mankind from God. (Thank you Jesus for restoring us to the Father!) Division (along with condemnation and accusation) is Satan's specialty. The word "devil," comes from the Greek word **diabolos**, which can be translated as, "to divide," "to separate," or more literally, "to throw against."

Because our World is fallen, "division" will unfortunately always be with us until Jesus returns in Glory. What I would like to focus on here is not so much the concepts of "unity" and "division" but rather "tolerance" and "Intolerance". Tolerance in our secular culture is held up as one of the cardinal virtues of a just society. Intolerance correspondingly is one of the most reviled qualities and principal deadly "sins" that one can demonstrate in an enlightened culture. Many would say, if there were an abundance of tolerance and a poverty of intolerance, unity would be a natural result. Secular society promotes, and in recent times **demand**s, that Christians should be more "tolerant" of a woman's "right to choose", gender confusion, restrictions on constitutionally guaranteed and God given rights, and the list of demands goes on and on. Not only is tolerance of secular values expected, but silence in promoting the value system of the world is a secular "sin of omission" so to speak. *"If those closed minded Christians would stop being so intolerant and get with the program, we would all get along great, right?"*

Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote a wonderful book in 1931 called "Old Errors and New Labels" I have read it several times and I always gain new revelation every time I do, because it is so prophetic and timeless. In the book there is a chapter entitled "A Plea for Intolerance". In the opening paragraph he makes this statement:

*"Our country is not nearly so much overrun with the bigoted as it is overrun with the broadminded. "*

He Continues in this chapter to develop the ideas that the concepts of "tolerance" and "intolerance" are poorly applied:

*"There are some minds that believe that intolerance is always wrong, because they make "intolerance" mean hate, narrow-mindedness, and bigotry. These same minds believe that tolerance is always right because, for them, it means charity, broad-mindedness; American good nature. What is tolerance? Tolerance is an attitude of reasoned patience towards evil, and a forbearance that restrains us from showing anger or inflicting punishment. But what is more important than the definition is the field of its*

*application. The important point here is this: Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to truth. Intolerance applies only to truth, but never to persons. Tolerance applies to the erring; intolerance to the error.... Tolerance does not apply to truth or principles. About these things we must be intolerant, and for this kind of intolerance, so much needed to rouse us from sentimental gush, I make a plea. Intolerance of this kind is the foundation of all stability. "*

Bishop Sheen concludes the chapter with this:

*"The truth is divine; the heretic is human. Due reparation made, she will admit the heretic back into the treasury of her souls, but never the heresy into the treasury of her wisdom. Right is right if nobody is right, and wrong is wrong if everybody is wrong. And in this day and age we need, as Mr. [G. K.] Chesterton tells us, "not a Church that is right when the world is right, but a Church that is right when the world is wrong."*

*"The attitude of the Church in relation to the modern world on this important question may be brought home by the story of the two women in the courtroom of Solomon [see 3 Kings 3:16-28]. Both of them claimed a child. The lawful mother insisted on having the whole child or nothing, for a child is like truth — it cannot be divided without ruin. The unlawful mother, on the contrary, agreed to compromise. She was willing to divide the babe, and the babe would have died of broad-mindedness."(tolerance)*

Brothers and Sisters, Our founding Scripture Isaiah 60 begins:

*"Arise Shine for your Light has come. The Glory of the Lord Rises upon you! For behold darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you"*

City of the Lord, what is your response to "times such as these"? In the quote above from Isaiah 60, the word "Glory" means "myself". God is saying I will make you into a reflection of "myself" that the World will see. Isaiah is saying that a world wrapped in darkness and confusion will see an image of God "himself" in His people and be drawn out of darkness. So... how are we doing, City of the Lord, in the "being an image of God himself" department?

One quality that Jesus revealed about the mystery of the Trinity, is that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one. There is unity in God. Unity begins and ends in God. If the world is going to see an image of God "himself" in us, we need to reflect the unity of God. One means to achieve this, as Bishop Sheen said, is being "tolerant" of each other, while remaining "intolerant" of error and evil, and then seeking the Holy Spirit to pour out the grace of covenant love upon us.

Often in recent days I find myself focusing on affairs of the government, the economy, and concerns of the world, rather than my call to build the Kingdom and introduce others to our Savior. Yes we need to be good citizens and not be "tolerant" of sin and corruption, but not at the expense of being "intolerant" of one another and to a world that needs Jesus now more than ever.

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." (Matthew 6:33-34, RSV-CE)*

Blessings, Jeff