

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, October 13, 2019

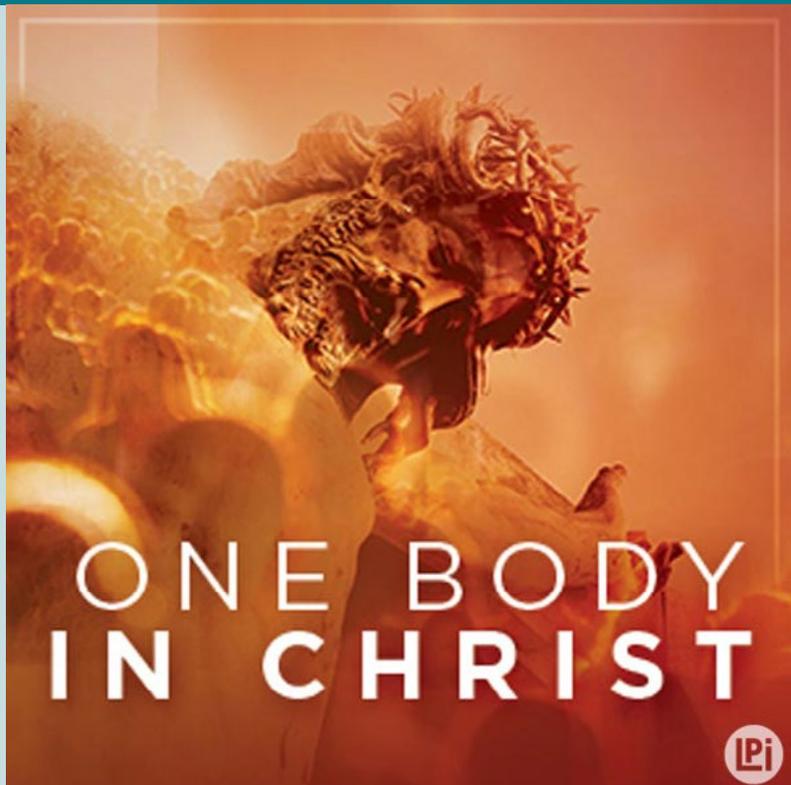
To Whom Do You Belong?

Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

2 Kings 5:14-17

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Luke 17:11-19



At the conclusion of the 1961 romantic comedy, “Breakfast at Tiffany’s”, the exchange between the two characters played by Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard proposes an interesting question: Do people belong to each other?

Hepburn’s character states, “People don’t belong to people.” Peppard’s character passionately responds, “You know what’s wrong with you, Miss Whoever-You-Are? You’re chicken. You’ve got no guts. You’re afraid to stick out your chin and say, ‘Okay, life’s a fact. People do fall in love. People do belong to each other, because that’s the only chance anybody’s got for real happiness.’ You call yourself a free spirit, a wild thing, and you’re terrified somebody’s going to stick you in a cage. Well, baby, you’re already in that cage. You built it yourself. And it’s not bounded in the west by Tulip, Texas, or in the east by Somaliland. It’s wherever you go. Because no matter where you run, you just end up running into yourself.” Of course, moments later, they embrace. Happy ending!

In St. Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he writes, “If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we persevere, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.” St. Paul teaches that as the Body of Christ, we are one with Jesus and that even if we are unfaithful to Him, he remains faithful to us because we belong to each

other. The thing is that just like Holly Golightly, played by Hepburn in the movie, we are afraid of losing ourselves in surrendering to Jesus. We want to die with him in Baptism, but when we arise, we would like some autonomy. We want to forge our own path. We want our freedom.

It is not hard to look at our current society and see countless examples of this fear in action. Athletes, politicians, and artists demonstrate this fear of losing themselves in something or someone else. These struggles don't even have to do with belonging to God. It is easy to imagine that if you can't let yourself belong to a team, a band, or another entity on earth, it is tough letting go to some heavenly being, especially if you have never met them or developed an authentic relationship with them.

What Peppard's character is stating in the movie is that working hard to avoid losing your freedom accomplishes the opposite. When we try to stay free on our own terms, we constantly find ourselves at dead ends. We move nowhere and accomplish nothing. In the end, we create our own cage and destroy our freedom, which is the last thing we wanted to do.

For us as Christians, this is where there is Good News. Jesus does not offer rules and regulations that confine us and crush our spirit. He offers us true freedom. We are no longer in the shackles of our own sin but instead are liberated by grace and are free to love in an authentic way. This is all made possible by *belonging* to him. As humans, this is not always easy because our pride and selfishness get in the way. That is why we have the Body of Christ. By belonging to one another, we become instruments of grace for each other. We share testimony to the truth of the value of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Amid all that is wrong in our world, you belong to me and me to you. We belong to our God as well. There is no need to fear. Those who seek to protect their liberty by shutting others out and remaining autonomous may never understand, but perhaps through our witness, we can be examples of the truth. In the words of the great St. Ignatius of Loyola in his Suspice prayer, "Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me."

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PRAYER

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
all I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

— *Suspice Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola*