

Sunday, January 31, 2016
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed

In the Name of the Lord

At every Mass during the “Holy, Holy, Holy”, we all pray “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Fortunately, Pope Benedict did not touch these words when he changed almost all the other prayers at Mass, for they are particularly salient to a true interpretation of Biblical spirituality. In fact, I believe they are the starting point of all religious truth. Imagine if we everything we said, did, and believed began from this premise “in the name of God.”

Some individuals, and alas even religious groups, misinterpret this counsel, using God to justify violence, war, and moralistic and theological legalism. There are numerous current examples, certainly ISIS, an extremist Islamic sect demanding absolute religious purity. Other religious causes are similarly dangerous, because they usurp one issue, e.g., abortion, divorce, homosexuality, and make it the central determinant of orthodoxy. All these believers may be sincere, but that does not mean they “come in the name of the Lord,” who is far more generous, merciful, and tolerant.

Dogma or laws never should be the primary focus of religion. The paramount truth of faith is love. For that matter, all ideologies are pernicious. They are ultimately incapable of recognizing the validity of other points of view, or admitting their own errors. “Coming in the name of the Lord” is a more reasonable and humble approach, for truth is not a set of of fixed ideas to which reality must conform but an evolving wisdom that faces issues in dynamic and creative ways. This is the concept of truth that Pope Francis is espousing.

“Coming in the name of the Lord” is a style of life, not a simple adherence to faith. It means a rejection of all violence, prejudice, and any kind of arrogance or moral superiority. It evidences divine qualities, such as compassion, hospitality, and gentleness. It is more intent on listening than talking or dominating. It searches for peace, never acts rudely, and is consistently kind. Those who are come “in the name of the Lord,” are altruistic and generous. This may seem impractical and idealistic but it would obviate and offset so many of the problems that beset our contemporary world today. I think it is time that we “come in the name of the Lord,” and feel the positive difference in our lives.