

A Short Teaching on Modern Sharecroppers
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on this Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings: Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; MK 10:35-45

Sharecropping in the post Reconstruction era was a economic structure that allowed poor, freed slaves and poor white famers to work land owned by another. It was a credit and service economy. The credit was issued by the merchants, the materials purchased from the same merchants and the service of farming attempted to pay the debt service and live off the remaining funds. This arrangement lasted right up to World Word II in some parts of the USA. It was an economy based on multigenerational debt slavery. Parents, children and grandchildren would service larger and larger debt to work the land. Those who owned the land and merchants who sold the supplies maintained a decisive edge on the economic life and livelihood of the poor with little concern for a just price for crops and imposed cost of goods. No choice but debt.

See: Debt Slavery: The Forgotten History of Sharecropping (The Hampton Institute).

You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. (Mk 10:42)

A modern version of debt slavery and multigenerational debt is emerging in the higher education realm. Parents and children are holding \$1.2 trillion in education debt. Continued education has become the primary pathway into the future yet it imposes a crushing debt and with less than adequate payoff. Those who own the schools and the banks who sell the money maintained a decisive edge on the economic life and livelihood of the people with little concern for a just price for education and imposing a heavy cost of funds. No choice but debt. See: Student loans becoming multigenerational debts (Associated Press).

Arrogant scoundrels pursue the poor; they trap them by their cunning schemes. The wicked even boast of their greed; these robbers curse and scorn the LORD. In their insolence the wicked boast: "God does not care; there is no God." (Ps 10:2-4) Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left (Mk 10:37). Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking." (Mk 10:38).

Christians who suppose for themselves mastery over others and power for themselves are far from the heart of God and do not know what they are asking for. It is not a long journey from desiring mastery over man, and the scorn of the LORD. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and so make a name for ourselves. (Gen 11:4)

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you. (Ps 33:22).

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry