

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
June 26-27, 2010 – Cycle C

*“A New Challenge, a New Commitment  
To Follow Jesus”*

“Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” [Luke 9: 54].

Fast forwarding to our times, there are groups of people who do not like Christ or the Christian religion. They have emerged as the darlings of the New York Times. They are on the best seller lists. They want to remove the “idiots” of society who spread the “poison of religion.” These darlings are the notable authors called the New Atheists.

Sam Harris has written a book entitled, “The End of Faith.” Christopher Hitchens has written a book entitled, “God is not Great, How Religion Poisons Everything.” Richard Dawkins has written a book entitled, “The God Delusion.” The new atheists say that they represent the inevitable future of “rational and scientific humanity” which will replace “the

irrational/religious humanity.” Their strategy and tactics have become focused and forceful.

Hitchens and Dawson have announced plans to arrest Pope Benedict XVI during his pastoral visit to England this coming September (2010). They accuse Pope Benedict of “crimes against humanity” because of the child abuse issue. This is a platform for new atheists to tout as they grow in attention.

In July 2008, a biology professor, Paul Z. Meyers, of the University of Minnesota declared, “Nothing must be held sacred. Question everything. God is not great. Jesus is not your Lord, you are not disciples . . .” His message was announced on his blog. He claimed also to have desecrated a consecrated host while making his remarks.

We are seeing the onset of “Blasphemy Day” which first occurred in 2009. Blasphemy Day included an event called “trade your bibles for pornography.” There is even an event to “de-baptize” believers by using hair dryers.

Is all this occurring because belief in God is on the upswing in America and in Europe (especially after many years of decline in Europe following WW II)?

Hitchens has four premises: **1)** Religion and religious faith misrepresents the origin of humankind; that there is no creator who created the universe and life. **2)** Religion makes humanity a slave. There is no freedom. **3)** Religion is the result of sexual repressions, the inability to really express sex-ual relations. **4)** Religion is wishful thinking about life after death.

Our consistent answers are: **1)** That there is a power beyond all forces, a wisdom beyond all thinking, a truth beyond all reasoning, a calm beyond all chaos, a prime mover and creator who is uncreated. What is more is that every culture in the world has expressed a desire for union with that power, the power beyond, the uncreated creator. **2)** No freedom: We answer that Jesus really did

understand humanity and following His ways gives freedom. **3) Sexual repression:** Sex/sexuality can be a chaotic power. Each of us needs some ordering of our reproductive habits in ways that respect the man, the woman, the child, and all of nature. Used the wrong way sexuality destroys. Used the right way it is life giving. Connected to Jesus, our ultimate good, this power gives life. Disconnected from ultimate good we can destroy each other. This is Paul's message in his letter to the Galatians, the second reading. **4) Life after death** is mysterious and beautiful. In Faith we believe that one person did come back from the dead in order to lead all from death to life. Moving on:

New atheists share a common cause, to ban "religious principles, expressions, art, words, and symbols" everywhere. It is not a simple matter or removing the word, "God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. The very word and idea of "God" would be removed from all parts of the American culture or

government. Parents would not be able to raise their children in “faith.” Religion is something that the new atheists want silenced. [See The Catholic Answer, July-August 2010].

“Lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” [Luke 9: 54-55]. Jesus rebukes the disciples and says, “no.” Jesus is implying that the unbelievers will come around just as Elisha came around to following Elijah. [First Kings 19: 19-21].

Jesus for His part invites many to follow. Jesus hears a reply, “let me go bury my father, or say farewell to my family.” These are backhanded responses. The first excuse means the father, most likely, had another twenty years to live before the father would die. It was a polite, but backhanded “No Thank You” to Jesus. The second excuse about the family, most likely, is that the wife is not yet dead and that she and the family come first, before Jesus.

Many people today do the same thing. “No thank you. Not yet Lord, not yet, if ever.”

So we pray: *Lord, Your challenge means a commitment from us to follow. Lord Jesus, there will always be people of disbelief. Show us by Your love how to convey the reality, the truth, the wisdom and eternal beauty that is You. Help us to share ultimate Love, wisdom and truth with all humanity as You did, Lord. In your name we pray for You live forever and ever. Amen.*

[See, “Who are the new Atheists?” by Robert Lakwood, The Catholic Answer V24, #3, p6-8, July, August 2010.]

Rev. A. J. Geraci  
St. Paul Church  
Yellow Springs, OH

