

12 Sunday Ordinary Time A 2017

June 25

Frazee/Callaway

The Ammonites were a people who lived in today's Jordan. They worshipped a false god named Moloch. Moloch was created out of bronze. He had the torso of a man and the head of a bull. He was built like a furnace. Children and animals were sacrificed in the furnace to please and pacify Moloch.

What is your image of God? Do you believe that God punishes you when you are bad or when you fail to be good? Do you live in fear that God curses you with bad luck or bad news because you have somehow offended him and you don't even know what you did? This is not our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that in Jesus the one, true God has revealed the secret of his inner life—that God is a communion of love. God is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(God is not a bronze statue of a half man/half bull. No. God is symbolized by us! We are made in the image of God. God's inner life of love is aptly symbolized by the Sacrament of Marriage, which is to be a sign of God's love and faithfulness forever. Marriage is for the good of the spouses and it is to be fruitful! This in contrast to a false God who requires the sacrifice of children.)

At one point, the people of Israel turned away from true worship and adopted the cult of Moloch. The "temple" to Moloch was in a valley Hinnom, which is a deep, narrow valley south of Jerusalem. At the time of Jesus, this valley was a forsaken junkyard, where garbage and the carcasses of dead animals were burned. It was called Gehenna. Gehenna is the Valley of Hinnom, where children were sacrificed to a false God. Memory of the history of this place was very much alive in the mind Jesus and the people of his day

Jesus consoles his disciples as he prepares them for the proclamation of the gospel. They will inevitably face persecution. Yet Jesus says to them, "Fear no one...And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna..." The body can be destroyed by accident or by violence. The soul is destroyed by turning away from God and by the worship of a false god.

The false gods of today are more subtle than Moloch, a towering furnace of bronze that destroys life. Today's idols are fashioned not out of bronze but out of ideals and cultural movements. They eat away at our convictions and dampen our courage. Today's idols lull us into apathy and beat us into the lowest common denominator of religion—that may be a nice God who is to stay out of our business.

No. Our God is a Trinity of persons, an eternal exchange of love. Our God became incarnate in his Son Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us and left us a memorial of his love in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

Do not be afraid to acknowledge Jesus Christ before others. He is the only way to the Father, the gate to heaven and the consolation of all who await eternity.