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Our Lady Queen of Peace

“Wives should be subordinate to their husbands.”
Does this sound bizarre to anyone? WHY?

Does anyone think that this is unwise for the Church to even announce such a viewpoint in Church? Who here thinks that we should drop it from the listing of readings proclaimed at Mass?

I don't.

2,000 years ago this teaching was definitely bizarre, but for different reasons than the ones we are thinking. The Church leaders were probably just like you—they didn't want it announced in Church—but for very different reasons:

Back then this reading would have been a promotion for women. It would have advanced the role of women exponentially, not take their role down as we hear these words today. Then in the Jewish law, women were not even considered a person. They were property, something possessed by a man. They were nothing in their own right. In fact, everyday a faithful Jewish man said a prayer of thanksgiving that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman, *things* that would have reduced his status in *that* world.

Now, to have Paul's letter that we read, we see something revolutionary. Women are afforded personhood. This Christian Paul, the great apostle of Jesus, challenges the status quo and makes women people! This challenged the former 2,000 years of religious teaching. Once again, we see Christianity upsetting the social order of the time. Isn't this the role of Jesus and his teaching: To challenge those places in our world where inequality, injustice, and disrespect reign supreme.

How will our Christianity challenge the social orders—~~and disorders~~—of our time?

As you return to school, you confront countless social disorders: Some people are considered more important, more popular, given more respect than others. Whether it is because they are better looking, more athletic or artistic, smarter, cooler or tougher or funnier, some people are viewed as bigger people in the school community. The same is true of us adults and our work and social settings. Some people are deemed more important than others, and we sometimes add air into that balloon by our behavior, attitudes, and choices. Isn't our Christianity meant to pop those balloons? .æwe add the air of Christ to those toxic environments?

In the year 4006, 2000 years from now, will those Christians think that we are bizarre for the way we afford status to people for such superficial reasons? What would our world be like if we celebrated people for the respect and charity they give away? Imagine this type of world!

I started out this homily by quoting the sound bite of Paul's letter that gets everyone's attention. Does anyone remember what line came before it? It is perhaps the most important line in all of Scripture for us who want to bring Christ's dream of the Kingdom of God: "Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ." This line begins what is called a Household Code, which were common 2,000 years ago. Guidelines for how to behave in our relationships.

I am sure that everyone here lives in a family where there are some household codes: Curfew, the amount of hours spent on the computer, watching TV, what are the driving limits, etc. In the household code of Christ, the major rule was this first one: Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for one another. This was to fuel all other behaviors.

Today we are reminded that we live in one big household, and it is the Household of God what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. In it, we are to be subordinate to all. This is a crazy rule on one hand, for it is replete with internal contradiction. If we keep on deferring to each other, who will ultimately "win" or "get their way," we might think. But that is just it: In the Household of God, the KOG, there are no winners and losers, just brothers and sisters who are radically equal and deserving and yearning for mutual respect.

Subordinate is a funny word. Today, I suppose it does evoke the idea of winners and losers: Those who come out of top and others beneath. In its truest form, subordinate means "to go under the line." When we go under the lines that our society and our schools and Churches have drawn we see the truth of God and the wisdom of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Under the line of our social orders, or should I say the bottom line, in the Household of God is how each and every last one of us is a child of God, made lovingly and sacredly to bless the world with gentleness, joy, and peace.

We see Peter in the gospel commit to Christ in a profound way. We renew our commitment to Christ through the Eucharist today. Will this commitment drive us to challenge the social orders we will encounter in school, work, or home? Will we be able to look beneath the line and see every last person as a child of God, deserving and yearning for our acceptance and respect? A great social prophet once said that "the first casualty of real commitment is the imperial ego we are so reluctant to tame" (John F. Kavanaugh, *The Word Encountered*, p. 97, 1996). The commitment we make to Christ today may be challenged as our insecurities get the best of us in the classroom or cafeteria or at work tomorrow. They certainly got the best of Peter. Remember, this same man who committed to Christ in today's gospel betrayed him three times during Jesus' time of great need. Peter's ego was fragile, and sometimes ours are too.

Perhaps the call today is to go beneath the line to taste and see that we, too, are a child of God. And, this identity, this ego-boost, is the most important mark of full dignity in the Household of God.