**WHEN I WAS A LIBERAL…..OR WAS I?**

When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.’

’The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

’The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master — that’s all.”

― Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass

Once upon a time, many years ago, in a far off land, some may have referred to me as a liberal because of my work with what today we call “marginalized people.” Later as I found myself attempting to exist in the Church into which I was born, I lived with the coexistence of multiple realities: pluraformities, “pluratruthisms,” etc. That does not mean I agreed nor does it mean that I was at peace. In a sense I was a liberal, because I coexisted with numerous perspectives, and those who were called “liberals” were anything but. They, like so many, have reversed the rules of logic and placed the burden of proof on those who maintain what has always been, thus making those who simply believe what the Church has always believed appear to be reactionary, and putting those of us who are simply old fashioned “Vincentian Canon” people on the defensive. We have nothing to be defensive about, unless we wish to say that we are Defending the Faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. A Bigbox church member recently asked me why we do what we do in terms of worship and belief. I simply said, that it is because that’s what we have been doing for 2,000 years. Why did you change it? Why do you not have weekly Eucharists as reported in the Acts of the Apostles? Why do you not have bishops as reported in the Pastoral Epistles? It is very odd that people who have made phenomenal changes to the “Faith once delivered,” as we read in St. Jude, wonder why “we” are so different. Just a few minutes in a Synagogue or Temple will make it clear that Liturgy is and always has been a Judeo-Christian reality. The Haggadah is clearly an order with elements that have never changed as the Exodus is recounted.

 And yet, people who have changed elements of the Faith can claim to be biblically orthodox (instead of heterodox,” traditional (without continuing what has been received) and conservative (without conserving what has been passed down.). Those who call themselves, orthodox, traditional and conservative in some instances have made the words fit their revisionist concepts. In other words, one must first revise something in order to find words to describe the new definition. It is difficult to imagine the adoption of innovations and still use these terms to describe oneself. The word “progressive” is now used by some as the replacement word for “liberal” but the word assumes that what is espoused is progress. Maybe, given what some of the causes are, the best word would be “regressive” since some of the issues have already been addressed in the Bible and in various Councils.

 Although the term “religionless Christianity” has been revived, there is also the phenomenon of civil or cultural religion which has its own Ordo Calendar with feast days and feast months. There are pseudo liturgical actions best demonstrated by the crowd, or, perhaps in some instances the mob. (Sociological difference noted.). In many ways we are seeing new religions, but since there are some recognizable vestiges of “church” they and our culture are supportive.

Thus, Lewis Carrol, the self described “Anglican High Churchman” would say:

I believe that when you and I come to lie down for the last time, if only we can keep firm hold of the great truths Christ taught us—our own utter worthlessness and His infinite worth; and that He has brought us back to our one Father, and made us His brethren, and so brethren to one another—we shall have all we need to guide us through the shadows. Most assuredly I accept to the full the doctrines you refer to—that Christ died to save us, that we have no other way of salvation open to us but through His death, and that it is by faith in Him, and through no merit of ours, that we are reconciled to God; and most assuredly I can cordially say, "I owe all to Him who loved me, and died on the Cross of Calvary."

 He made words mean something, and Alice and Humpty Dumpty speak them, but in the end, we must be very careful how we describe ourselves, and be very honest. Words that we may have used now mean something else, and words that we now use may be unrelated to an earlier meaning. Careful listening and observation will help us see the difference. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”