

DEFINE PROGRESS

Define progress.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines progress as “development towards an improved or more advanced condition.”

Merriam-Webster defines progress as “gradual betterment.”



By the example sentences that each provides, both definitions imply an anthropological nature of the word “progress;” development, improvement and betterment in humanity.

True progress is whatever leads us to God. Decline leads us away. We want true progress.

True progress unites, eventually. Sowing the seeds of division is Satan’s occupation, which may seem to be a fast-growing industry. But Christians remain hopeful.

We achieve unity when we seek the common good, “the general welfare of the entire human family.” It’s not just about “me” but about “us.”

Division is the outcome when the philosophy is “me first, and others like me.” Jesus’ commandment to “love your neighbor” did not conclude with “but me first.”

God is light. Satan is darkness.

True progress is whatever leads us to the light. Decline moves us away from the light and towards the darkness.

The Holy Spirit gently takes our hand and guides us to the light. First, we must listen to the Holy Spirit, discern its message (if the message is to avoid the good and seek the evil, it’s not the Holy Spirit), trust in the Holy Spirit, and choose the light.

Keeping Jesus’s commandments is the light: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth.”

Christians remain hopeful. There is no room for pessimism, not when Christ and the Advocate is always with us.

St. Peter instructs Christian communities to keep Jesus’s commandments while being “enthusiastic for the good:” “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence...”

St. Catherine of Sienna echoed this when she wrote that “Jesus cannot use wrath or war to entice the sheep away from its ruin ... he sees that the human heart is drawn by love as by nothing else, since it is made by love.”

True progress is the path we take as we keep Jesus’s commandments to love God and neighbor. It is a journey we take with good cheer and abundance of hope, with kindness of heart and gentleness of tongue, with our companion the Holy Spirit.

(Readings for the 6th Sunday of Easter)