

33rd Sunday on Ordinary Time - Homily

It has been an interesting week... and a long eleven months.

- For over a year we have been bombarded with campaign information that has been anything but uplifting.
- The denigration we have witnessed indicates a deep division among the people in this nation.
- We have been scarred by this experience and I fear we suffer from “wounds” that go far deeper than the ideas and policies that were at stake in this election.
- We have invested ourselves heavily in one candidate or the other, over a broad range of very important issues.
 - Many of these issues we hold very close to our hearts.
 - And because we hold these things so deeply and passionately, they have become personal... this has created an “us versus them” mentality.
 - This is a dangerous place to be.

On the day after the election I became keenly aware of just how much the entire process of the last year has affected our nation.

As I greeted each class of students I had to confront a clear sense of uneasiness among the students.

- Most of the tension was over bragging rights... those who wanted the winner were vindicated and those who wanted the person who lost were bewildered and angry.
 - There was some minor tension over the direction the country would take on the issues, especially immigration.
 - But their greater concerns focused on the darkness, hatred and rancor they were seeing expressed in the national news, and on social media sites such as twitter, and Facebook.
 - My students were far more troubled by the violent acts they were witnessing by their fellow citizens on YouTube.
 - This is what they were afraid of... people who had become unreasonable, unruly, and unhinged.

It was a great opportunity for a teach-able moment on what we should value as a nation.

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I reminded them that the most important value instilled as part of their Catholic Education is to make their faith operative in all the decision they will be asked to make.

- I offered them some insight on my own particular political roller-coaster ride of the past year before offering them this thought...
- When we choose success and experience as the world defines them... over virtue, character, and the ultimate good we will always be left with a result that leaves us feeling empty and wanting.
 - This left them quiet.
 - Heads nodded.
- I reminded them that the future of this country, and of this world rest with them... if you don't like what happened in this election then it is up to you to change it.
- I challenged them to consider that things will never change as long as we continue to use the world's standards for success and experience...
 - That bar is way to low.
- I challenged them to make virtue and character matter... to put it first in every decision they make from selecting a spouse to voting for a President.
 - Greatness demands that you raise the bar!
- Finally I reminded them that we are all made in God's image and likeness and because that is true we are called to greatness.
 - And that greatness comes with a price... that price is sacrifice.
 - Sacrifice is what molds us into people of character and virtue.
 - Character and virtue will not make the many tough decisions we have to make any easier... but they will make them just for the greatest amount of people.
 - And God will surely bless that work... tough though it is.
- I asked them to commit to making their world great using the tools of faith they have been given by you their parents, our school, and the Church.
- I asked them to allow Christ to work in their life.
 - And I challenged them to do so by being people of character and virtue.

Pope Benedict XVI echoed this sentiment when he wrote that the ways of the Lord are not comfortable. He too, reminded us... that we are not created for comfort. We are created for greatness.

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In other words, we are created to be holy for that is the ultimate measure of greatness.

- Holiness means to live in friendship with God.
- It means that our wills are united with his, in good times and in bad, and that gives us the eternal joy of being loved, and loving in return.
- And God asks us to *persevere* in that friendship, especially through the tough times, relying and trusting on the help of his grace.

Today's readings highlight our call to be holy.

- The first reading reminds us that our lives don't last forever, and this world doesn't last forever.
 - With that in mind we must ask... How are we living?
 - Are we ready to meet Jesus face to face today?
- The psalm reminds us that: the Lord is coming.
 - When we live in friendship with Him, this announcement brings us a deep and abiding experience of joy.
 - It's a call to shake off any drowsiness that might have invaded our hearts and to think about the greatness to which we're called.
 - It's a call to raise the bar on our standards and to reject how the world defines great.
- And finally in the Gospel, Jesus warns us that our lives won't be easy.
 - We're not created for comfort – we're created for greatness.
 - And we are encouraged to persevere in our journey with him.
 - Jesus reminds us that: "Our perseverance, will secure our lives."
 - There can be no holiness without perseverance.
 - There can be no perseverance without trial.

The storms of life and living in an imperfect world will batter all of us. There is no escaping the storms.

- Sometimes those storms are outside of us...
 - Global or societal issues like elections, natural disasters, the loss of a job, epic failures in our most important relationships, sickness, disease, terminal illness and death.
 - These challenge us to put virtue and character first especially when we feel that things are beyond our control.
 - The idea that we control things is a myth anyway.
- Sometimes the storms are within us.

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- We can be tormented by anxiety or self-doubt, intense loneliness, and other mental or emotional struggles.
- These internal struggles weaken our resolve and challenge our self-worth and our goodness.
 - It is hard to look in the mirror and see the image and likeness of God in ourselves.
- God reminds us that our weaknesses and struggles are not an obstacle to our holiness,
 - They are the Cross that perfects us.
 - The goal is to persevere those crosses and commit to trying to walk even more closely with him.
- God is walking with us, and he wants to help form our character and align us with His virtue and ultimate good.
- He has promised to be by our side through it all.
- If we ask for His help... we can be assured he will give it.

You, me... We are all called to holiness.

And we can be assured of God's assistance and help if we want it.

- Today's readings, remind us that we are called to greatness, and that greatness is measured by our closeness to God.
- Our closeness to God will always be measured by how we love... not only ourselves, but others.
 - Especially those we don't agree with... but most especially those we see as unlovable.
- It is important to remember that the most important thing we are called to do is to keep trying to love.

A saint, after all, is simply a sinner who keeps on trying.