

Homily for the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time
February 9, 2020
By Nick Thompson

When I was young, and believe me that time is getting more difficult to remember all the time, anyway back when I was young my grandmother, Willie Pontrich, often reminded me of what she referred to as the Litany of Regret. It went like this, “Shoulda, woulda, coulda, hada oughta but didn’t.” Now grandma had thirteen children and she must have taught this litany to each one and they in turn taught it to their spouses because growing up I got a regular dose of it daily. Any time we began to make excuses for our actions, we heard it. Every time an opportunity was missed, we heard it. Every time a bad choice was made, we heard it. Every time we didn’t do what we were supposed to, we heard it. My mom took us kids to confession every Saturday morning and on the walk to church she would remind us to examine our conscience. Think about the Litany of Regret she would say, figure out all the things you “shoulda, woulda, coulda, hada oughta but didn’t, all the things in life you now feel obliged to make an excuse for. Tell God your sorry and that from now on you’ll try to keep your eyes open to see the things you shoulda done, to plan ahead for the things you woulda done differently, to keep your ears open to hear the advice that

coulda saved you, and to make the choices you hada oughta. That way God won't have to listen to the same list next week.

Our Gospel this morning follows immediately after what is referred to as the beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, a list of those opportunities we should take advantage of during our lives, the positive actions we ought to participate in so that we might be blessed by God, might become holy, become saints. In fact, all of the readings this morning are about all the opportunities we shoulda, woulda, coulda, hada oughta acted on during our lifetime to gain entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven. If we are not enhancing the flavor of life with God's love, if we are not lighting up the room in order that all may see God more clearly then we are no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Wow! The words seem harsh. I mean, I don't know about you, but I do believe these are the last words I want to hear at my final judgement.

How then do we become salt and light? Dressing and acting like movie stars and celebrities on Oscar night or sparkling like rap singers at the Grammy awards is not going to get us noticed in heaven. When our final judgement comes, what will get Jesus' attention? It will be the spotlight we have shined on Him with our lives. Isaiah the prophet foretold Jesus message, "Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, and

do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn. If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation, and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.” Scripture, the Word of God clearly provides the answer to our question. Life provides the opportunities for us to shine our light on the power of God.

Scripture has made it clear. No excuses should be necessary. But grandma, I didn't hear him, but grandma I didn't see him, but grandma I didn't understand him, but grandma I didn't see him coming. Lord Jesus save us from hearing the litany of regret coming from your mouth at our final judgement, “Shoulda, woulda, coulda, hada oughta but didn't.” Help us to open our eyes to see the things we shoulda done. Help us to plan ahead for the things we woulda done differently. Helps us to keep our ears open to hear the advice that coulda saved us. And above all help us to make the choices we hada oughta.