

We are a people given the intellect and spirit to recognize our creator.

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B

Wis 7:7-11, Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17, Heb 4:12-13, Mk 10:17-30



Dcn Frank Sila
10-10-2021

Good evening. It is good to be with you. I recently returned from four days of fly-fishing the Au Sable River. We made the trip with our daughter, son-in-law and grandson. Before leaving, trying to be a good grandfather, I took our grandson Oliver aside for a life lesson. I told him that he was expected to ask, “Are we there yet?” throughout the three-hour trip. It seemed like practical advice for a three year old. Imagine my surprise before leaving, when our daughter asked, “Oliver, do you want to ride with mom and dad or grandpa and grandma? Renata and I were blessed with Oliver’s company and frequent questions, “Are we there yet?”

Are we there yet? Are we on the right path? These are the questions of today’s Gospel. Jesus offers the commandments as a path and the young man says that he has followed the commandments since his youth. In Matthew 22, when challenged as to the greatest commandments Jesus identified love of God and neighbor, going on to say that, “...all the law and the prophets hang on these two laws.” Love of God and neighbor are relationships. For this reason Jesus lovingly responds, “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” Our possessions are only problematic when they become obstacles to the compassion that Jesus asks.

Henri Nouwen, offers a beautiful reflection of compassion. “Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. But that is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it. As busy, active relevant [people,] we want to earn our bread by making a real contribution. This means, first and foremost, doing something to show that our presence makes a difference. And so we ignore our

greatest gift, which is our ability to enter into solidarity with those that suffer...” Those that can sit with their fellow man, not knowing what to say, but knowing that they should be there, can bring new life into a dying heart. Those who are not afraid to hold a hand in gratitude, to shed tears of grief, and to let a sigh of distress arise straight from the heart can break through paralyzing boundaries and witness the birth of a new fellowship, the fellowship of the broken.”

Pope Francis understands that our compassion is foundational. For this reason, he asks on behalf of the church, ‘Are we there yet?’ How does the Catholic Church move forward as people of compassion? That is a question for the 2023 World Synod of Bishops. Pope Francis recognizes the everyday sacraments of life; moments where God’s Spirit quietly touches family and us. In preparation for this Synod, Pope Francis requests that the whole church enter into a time of prayerful listening and discernment of the Spirit that guides all things. We are being asked to reflect on where we have found God in our lives and where his Holy Spirit is leading us. Everyone, clergy, laity, and former Catholics will have the opportunity to share the gift of their reflection. We live with a heightened awareness of scientific studies. We know a greater number of study participants yields a more meaningful and reliable finding. Not content to rest with the conclusions of 500,000 clergy, Pope Francis desires to incorporate the prayer and reflection of the 1.3 billion Catholics in the world. Pope Francis desires to know how God is touching the domestic church in order to better serve and lead. I have lived on both sides of Vatican II. Vatican II was described in the 60’s as the Church opening a window. This Synod, beginning today at the Vatican, opens a window on the other side of the room. This holds excitement, great promise and hope. Our diocesan opening of the synod will be celebrated with an 11:30 Mass, next Sunday October 17, at the Cathedral. Details on the synod will follow in the weeks ahead.

The comments and reflections that I prepare for you often involve stories of friends, family and creation. It is in those relationships that God touches me. I tell the stories because I hope you may recognize God touching your life as well.

We are a people given the intellect and spirit to recognize our creator.

That is a truth for all people beyond religious boundary. In recognizing our Creator, we are moved to awe, wonder and through our compassion to love. This is profound. In no small part, that is what we come here to celebrate. We gather to celebrate God with us.

In our Eucharistic prayer, we ask to be joined in a wider communion with the apostles and those who have gone before us. We receive the Body of Christ while St. Paul assures us that we are the Body of Christ. May we recognize in this communion the 'Fellowship of the Broken' and those who have shared Christ's love and compassion with us.

Works Cited

All scripture quotations are taken from. *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB, 1987.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org. n.d.

Nouwen, Henri. *Daily Meditation: Compassion is Being With*. New York: Convergent Books, 16 June 2021. Electronic.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org.

Note: And now for the rest of the story. Wading and fly-fishing the clear waters of the Au Sable River is always inviting. Brook trout were catch and release only because of the PFAS pollution. That saddens me greatly. What have we done to this wondrous gift of creation?