**September 22, 2019: Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

I remember, when I was sixteen years old, there was a shirt I wanted and so I asked my Mom to buy it for me. Her response was quick and quite simple, “You are now old enough to get a job and buy whatever shirt you want. We will buy your school clothes and some at Christmas and Easter. Anything else, at this point, has to come from you.” My Dad helped me get a job at the local department store as a maintenance person. When I received my first paycheck, I did not buy the shirt that I thought I had to have. It’s kind of funny about what you think you must have when someone else is paying for it, as opposed to when you have to pay for it yourself.

How do we determine what we really need in our life? In many ways that is the most important question we can ask ourselves. And to discern the answer, we must understand what we most treasure. As Jesus tells us, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” How do we determine what we treasure in life? That is really simple: what do you put your biggest effort into achieving, and why do you do it?

For example, you could have two people who work in the same job and make the same money. They both work extremely hard in what they do, and they put in long hours in order to maximize their pay. The time and effort that they expend leads to both realizing that they want to make as much money as possible. But their reasons are very different. Person A is trying simply to make as much money as possible to buy the things he/she considers important, such as a nice car, a big-screen TV, a large home, and so forth. Their entire focus is on what they can own here and now. Person B is trying to earn the money in order to support his/her family, such as getting a home that meets their particular needs, saving for the children’s college, buying clothes and food that are necessary, etc. Person A is concerned simply about what he/she can buy with the money they earn. Person B is concerned about the needs of others. Person A’s treasure is about self. Person B’s treasure is the other people in his/her life.

The most important decisions we make in our lives are highly influenced by what we treasure. Simply look at what is clearly most difficult for people to give to others—their time. How often do we hear people tell us they are multi-tasking to be more efficient? How often do we see people struggling to get done all the things they need to do, simply because they do not have the time they need? Most people are feeling more and more stretched by the various demands placed on them. And when that one more thing is asked of them, they come to feel overwhelmed—and rightfully so. How we make use of our time tells us what is truly most important to us.

We simply need to look at sports in our culture. Now, I love watching sports. But, at the same time, it and other such activities have taken an overblown importance in our society. How many of our kids play in multiple leagues of the same sport throughout the year? And doctors have made it clear that this is not good or healthy for kids. It can and does lead to repetitive injuries such as stress fractures, ligament strains, or worse. They occur because stress is being put on their young bodies which are not yet done growing. They are in stages of growth and, as such, are more prone to harm when their bodies are used in same way over and over again. And still we, as a society, see nothing wrong with what is happening. Why?

It is about what we have decided that our treasures should be. Many parents have this insane idea that their child will be the next great ‘whatever.’ We put them into sports so they can get into college. We put them into sports to ensure they have something to do—or whatever the choice might be. But the question is, what is the cost that our kids will pay in the long term for what we are doing? It comes back to asking ourselves what is it we are really trying to gain by our decisions? What is it that we want to achieve? And does it make sense based on what we are doing?

As we look at the world around us, we see that people have many different ideas as to what is their most important need in life. As a Christian the most important thing we should want is to get to heaven. As a spouse your primary responsibility is to get your spouse to heaven. As a parent your primary responsibility is to get your child to heaven. As a Christian your most important responsibility is to get another person to heaven. Our greatest need then as a Christian is to live a life that allows us to do just that. How then do we achieve that? We look simply to the life of
Christ and see what He did to get us to heaven. And for Jesus it came down to living his life by one simple principle, “Not my will but God’s will.” May we come to do the same and find the only treasure that matters.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian