

## Homily

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2/9/20

Let your “yes” mean yes, and your “No” mean no. All of our readings this weekend have been about saying yes, specifically to the will of God, specifically to those rules and commandments that He put here to hold us under His thumb. That’s not what He put them here for! You kidding me? He gave us these rules because He wants us to be happy. He wants us to experience joy. He wants us to have peace in our hearts.

But for some reason when we hear that there’s a rule or a law, we act like teenagers and we want to see how far we can go pushing the boundaries of those laws until we fall into them. That’s what the ancestors that Jesus was referring to in today’s gospel were talking about. Well, we aren’t supposed to do this, but *even if you do this*, do not kill. Even if you have anger in your heart, the Lord says, instead of bringing your gift to the altar, leave your gift where it is, and go reconcile with your brother and then come and bring your gift. How many times do we come into Mass, how many times do we come to this altar of the Lord with anger in our hearts? With frustration in our hearts, with confusion in our hearts that we could have worked through, that we could have brought up?

Many times, we’re like, “Father, I hate this person.” “Um, I don’t want to love them, I don’t want to forgive them, I’d rather just be miserable.” My response is “Why?” Because many times we don’t realize that while we have this anger, this hatred in our heart, really the only person it affects is us. And then rarely does the person that we hate realize that we hate them. I had a classmate in seminary that come to find out that I said one thing wrong, this one time, and he had taken it to heart and I didn’t even know about it for two and a half years. It took two and a half years of him getting frustrated and angry and vengeful. And then then he told me, this one time you said this one thing! And I said, I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking, I didn’t realize the impact of my words. But if he had come to me two and a half years before he wouldn’t have had that malice in his heart.

How many times do we get into feuds with each other, and we just know we’re mad at each other but we don’t know why. Talking about the Hatfields and the McCoys. Does anyone really know why it started? No, just that they hated each other. The Capulets and the Montagues, why did it start? I don’t know. We have all these feuds in our lives all these different grudges, the reality is that if we follow the prime law that God gave us, that would have made it so much easier. Because hatred in our heart is not where the Lord lives. In fact the Lord cannot live in our hearts if we have hatred in them; they are hardened against the Lord.

In Scripture, when Jesus talks about our hearts being hardened, that’s what He’s talking about. Because love is God’s presence within us. Hatred, then, is the rejection of God’s presence

and love within us. So, the reason many times that we struggle to follow those laws that God gives to us is that we struggle to integrate and embrace the love that God has for us.

One of the hardest things for us as human beings to deal with when we deal with the laws of God is the law of obedience. Obedience; I don't like that. Most kids don't like it, most parents don't like it. I mean, for me growing up, all my dad had to do was look at me and go like this (holds up 4 fingers). Do you know what I mean when I do this? "Honor your father and your mother." Number 4. Any time I'd have a snarky comment he'd be like (holds up 4 fingers) "Yeah dad, whatever!" Because sometimes we have that snarkiness in our families. But dad was right. When I wasn't honoring my father and my mother what I was really saying was, "God, Your rules really have no impact in my life."

Out of obedience, though, we're called to follow all of the laws of God, not just the part that's convenient. We hear about cafeteria Catholicism: you take what you like and you leave what you don't. "Oooh, that looks really nice, I'll take that. But I don't want greens! Yuck." It's so easy to accept some parts of our faith, but at the same time we don't want to take other parts because they're hard.

One of the forms of obedience, as a priest for me, is to talk about the ACA. You guys know me, I hate talking about money. I hate, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. But we have to. Because the longer I am a priest, the more I realize unfortunately, everything runs on money. The parish can't function, we can't have programs. Our successful program that we have on Wednesday nights, I don't publicize this, but every week it costs about a hundred dollars for food. Do the math: we're spending \$5000 a year on food for our RE program. That's not talking about the books or supplies, but it's so important that we do that. Why? Because half of you guys are showing up every Wednesday. That shows that it's a productive program, but programs take funding.

On a larger scale, the archdiocese takes money. And it's not just, "Well we've got endowments in place and so we can then use those to foot the bill." Well, yes, we do have endowments in place, and yes that does foot 1/3 of the bills of the diocese budget. The budget of the diocese is between 9 and 10 million dollars a year. And a third of that comes from the endowments, so it's fantastic that we have that, but a third of that also comes from the Annual Catholic Appeal.

The reality is, one of our largest line items every year, helped me become a priest. Every single year, for one seminarian to go to seminary, it costs about \$50,000. The average length of a seminarian's career in seminary is 8 years. Quick math, \$400,000 got me ordained. I looked and did the math at how long it would take me to pay back \$400,000, not even talking interest. If I spent every single penny that I made as a priest, after taxes, it would take me 25 years to pay back the loans. The reality is, it's impossible to do so. If it were not for the ACA, I would not have been able to afford to become a priest. And I say that to say, every year our goal

combined with Corpus Christ, our sister parish, ends up being around \$50,000. Which means, we're being tasked to pay for the education this year of our future pastor.

That's only part of the ACA. There are so many other programs that are funded through this process. About three weeks ago, I put a link on our Facebook page to the video that the diocese put out. I was so proud when I saw it because for the first time in the history of the diocese, our sister parish was highlighted in this video. Because we are as members of St Robert Bellarmine, part of Corpus Christi. And she is our "older sister." The reality is that we all come together to support each other.

It's so easy to have this mentality of, "No, I want to pay for just my church. My church is what matters the most." Actually, without the diocese, St Robert's doesn't exist. Without the diocese, we couldn't get insurance money to fix things. Without the diocese, we don't have a church to call our own. And so we're being asked every year to then give generously to the Archdiocesan Catholic Appeal.

Our goal this year is larger than last year. Because our population is larger than last year. Last year our average was about 145 people for Mass each weekend. We have 143 in here today, we had 76 last night. We're averaging about 200 people a weekend right now. So because we continue to hit our goals and we continue to grow, the diocese has no idea what to do with us! We are growing so incredibly fast, the diocese said, well, if you guys hit \$22,500 last year, how about \$23,000 this year.

The interesting thing is that the diocese learned a lesson through the One Church, Many Disciples Campaign. They learned that if there's an incentive for a parish to reach their goal, more parishes will probably reach their goal. So over our goal of \$23,000, every dollar that is pledged and given, 50% will come back to the parish. That's something the diocese has never done before. If we'd had that last year, we'd have gotten \$400 that could have then paid for most of the food we have on Wednesday nights. So this year with our goal being \$23,000, anything over that we raise, 50% comes back to the parish.

Those funds could be used for a plethora of different things. In addition to our Wednesday programs, I also want to do something for the kids. We have a lot of kids here in Mass today. The sign of a healthy and growing parish is the youth. I want to be able to send our kids to Steubenville in the summer. I want to be able to send some of our kids who can't afford it due to financial restraints, to Catholic education. If you haven't looked into Catholic education lately, it's really, really expensive. And since we don't have a school attached to our parish, I do a lot of wheeling and dealing behind the scenes, with pastors and principals to try and make it a little more affordable for our kids. There are some parishes that ask our parish to pay a subsidy, and there are some parishes that are like, "Eh, we got this. You're giving us students; we'll waive that for you."

But helping out with some of those subsidies as well will be where some of those extra funds go. And then anything we have left over after that (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) will go

towards the future of our parish. Because if you've noticed, if you come on Wednesday nights, we have zero space. Zero space, for kids. This last week we had 27 adults in here in English. We had 16 adults in Spanish. If you didn't come this last Wednesday, there's no room, so much so that the Spanish adults said, you know what, we'll bite the bullet this week. You know where the refrigerator is in the parish center? There's that little gap between the refrigerator and the box? They put two tables there and sat in the corner.

We have no space. We are continuing to grow. We have so many kids, I we had 16 high school kids, and I believe 12 junior high kids crammed into our old building. There's no space. We have kids that come every Wednesday that sit out in our breezeway, and normally we have a class going on in the office/cry room/bathroom/confessional/whatever else you want to call it. But we have to have all those slashes because we have no room!

The reality is we are looking in the parish council into how we can grow based on our current footprint. Do we purchase a new building? Do we build a new church and turn this structure into office and classroom space? So many different things on the table, but without funding, and support from the diocese, none of this is possible.

So now comes the fun part because I get to stop talking. So what I'd ask you to do is to please take on of the envelopes from the end of the pews, pass them down, fill them out, and when we get to the collection. just place them in the baskets; we'll separate them at the end of Mass.

One other thing that's important is that if you don't have cash on you today that's ok. There's a couple of different methods of giving on here. The one-time gift – if that's all you can do, that's fantastic. But what I recommend is seeing if you can make a monthly gift. A monthly pledge helps much more over the long haul than a one-time gift. So if you have no cash on you right now, that's fine. We have opportunities for a 10-month pledge, so if you give \$20 a month for 10 months, that adds up to \$200. That might mean not getting Sonic five times a month. For those of us who get Sonic, that's a sacrifice! I understand that. But how much more would it mean to put those five times a month aside, to the future education of a priest, to all of the growth going on in the diocese? To the Hispanic ministry? To multicultural diversity? We have all of these programs that are going on in our diocese, and this gives us the opportunity to go and do that. So I'm going to go sit down. I'm going to be quiet, and we can fill these out.