

Diocesan Delegation to NCYC---Pre-Conference Planning

November 7, 2019 5:30 p.m. Diocesan Pastoral Center Chapel

I'm so glad that you're all here this evening, and that we can have this very nice, intimate celebration of Jesus' Presence among us.

We've just heard *Jesus Present* in God's holy Word; in just a few moments, we will see *Jesus Present* with us in the Holy Eucharist. We are here, united by our Faith in Jesus, as sisters and brothers of one another in Christ, the Word made Flesh, Who makes His dwelling among us, especially in the Sacraments, and in particular in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. So, every time we come to Mass, and listen to the Readings, we're with Jesus.

In fact, as we listened to this evening's First Reading, we heard St. Paul begin by addressing us as "*Brothers and Sisters*"; that's who we are in Christ, and who we become thru our Baptism.

When someone asks you who you are, how do you answer? There's a whole bunch of ways to answer, aren't there? You can give your name.... You can associate yourself with your School.....You can tell people what Grade you're in..... You can reveal what ethnicity you are.....But, above all, you need also to say: "*I'm a beloved child of God; I'm a brother/sister of Jesus Christ; I'm a Christian Catholic, and proud of it!*" So, that's what St. Paul was reminding us about in this evening's First Reading----not just "who" we are, but "Whose" we are. That's why he said: "*None of us lives for one self.....For us who live, we live for the Lord; and when we die, we die for the Lord. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*"

And that's why we should not----and cannot----judge someone else; we can't look down on anyone else; we can't make fun of others; we can't bully those weaker than us, and we can't ostracize those we don't like. That's not our job to do; that's only for God to do. What we can do, and need to do, is to love one another, as sisters and brothers in

Christ. So, each of us needs to help one another along the way, but to make sure that we're being accountable to God for ourselves: am I doing what's right?; am I making sure that I'm being the best "who I am" that I can be?

That's how Jesus treated everyone, as we heard in this evening's Gospel. He wanted to talk to anyone, and everyone, who wanted to talk to Him. So, as we heard, Jesus was surrounded by "*tax collectors and sinners*", and the Scribes and Pharisees began to criticize Him: "*This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!*" They were "judging" Jesus; they were being "critical" of Him; little did they know that they were absolutely right; that's exactly what Jesus intended to do----He came to be with "sinners"---to call people away from sin and to follow Him in their lives on a path to holiness. And so Jesus taught these two Parables----about the Lost Sheep; and the Lost Coin. And I'm sure that we all understand the point that Jesus is making: that He will go to any lengths to find us when we are what is lost.

None of us ever wants to be called a "Loser", right? And yet, we all "lose" stuff all the time. Losing "stuff" is one thing; if it's not too valuable, or meaningful, we might just say: "Oh well", and go get another one, or do without it.

But sometimes we lose more important things than "stuff"; we could lose a friend; we could lose our temper and do something stupid; we could lose our health; we could be pressured to lose our good sense and do something that, a), could get us in a lot of trouble; or b), could jeopardize our eternal salvation. We could lose our way in life.

The good news is that Jesus is in charge of the "Lost and Found". That's what these two Parables are telling us. Jesus will go to great lengths to go after the one who is Lost: sheep, coin, High School boy or girl; a Youth Chaperone, or even a Bishop.

Where are all your friends when it comes to being “proud and beloved Children of God”? There’s no doubt that God loves them all; but so many choose not to love God; or believe in God. We can’t treat them like “a lost pen”, and say “Oh well, I’ll just get another”. We have a responsibility to encourage them, and help them. We certainly can’t “judge” them or “look down on them”; but we also shouldn’t ignore them or just say: it’s none of my business. Maybe all they need is for you to invite them to join you. Maybe all they need is for you to be proud of your Faith in Jesus, and not “*hide your Light under a bushel basket*”, as Jesus likes to say.

I love what Pope Francis says about this situation. He writes: “In Jesus’ vision, there are no sheep that are definitively lost, but only sheep that must be found again.” Part of that is our responsibility.

In just a couple weeks, you’ll be traveling to Indianapolis to Lucas Oil Stadium to participate in the NCYC---the National Catholic Youth Conference. You’ll be 30 people among 20,000 other young people, just like you, from all over the United States. And I’m very much looking forward to being there with you on Friday and Saturday of that 4 day gathering. There will be lots of great music, and inspiring talks by nationally well-known musicians and speakers. There will also be lots of opportunities to encounter Jesus: in making a good Confession; in spending time with Him in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; in the celebration of Holy Mass; and in great conversations with your peers from lots of other dioceses. This is a great opportunity----to have a good time, of course; but more importantly, to think about that most important of all questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What do I believe in? What does Jesus want me to do? How can I follow Him faithfully, joyfully, and courageously thru my life?

That’s a huge challenge----it’s not easy! You already know that; I’m not telling you anything you haven’t already figured out, and that you see played out every day. Making good, and virtuous choices; trying to

be a good person; standing up for what you believe in----None of that is easy. You can't do it on your own. You need your Faith. You need the Sacraments. You need the Eucharist. You need Jesus. And you need the love and support of one another----your sisters and brothers in Christ.

And, you need to think about the Communion of Saints. We're all familiar with the Saints. We just celebrated the great Feast of "All Saints" a few days ago. Don't we sometimes think that "Saints" were kind of born that way; they lived in a bubble of some sort; they had it easy? Well, of course, we all know that's not true. There's no Saint that didn't have to fight against all the pressures exerted against them, including having to fight against Satan Himself, to make the choices that ultimately led them to Heaven. There are a ton of Saints. And they're not all just a bunch of "old" people who became Saints. There are lots of young people, like yourselves, who became Saints at very young ages. How about these?

- A. St. Joan of Arc----age 19 (1412-1431)----a Peasant girl; received vision from St. Michael the Archangel---urged her to rise up and help the French defeat the English in the Hundred Years' War. This young girl became instrumental, in direct combat, and was ultimately put to death.
- B. St. Kateri Tekakwitha----age 24 (1656-1680)----Algonquin-Mohawk---Native American----here in North America. Became a Catholic at age 19----shunned by her own people. Relentless in her love for Jesus no matter what. Canonized 7 years ago, 2012.
- C. St. Maria Goretti----age 11 (1890-1902)----Italy. Attempted seduction. Stabbed 14 times. She forgave Allesandro.
- D. St. Jose Sanchez del Rio----age 14 (1913-1928) Mexico. Captured during the Cristero War. He was tortured mercilessly, and then killed. He would never betray Christ.

E. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati----age 24 (1901- 1925)----
Weakened by illness, but sacrificial works of charity until his death.

You too are called to be a Saint----maybe not one of the canonized, but your destiny is to get to Heaven, and to live with the Communion of All the Saints for all eternity.

Just keep in mind what St. Paul told us this evening, and what Jesus, the One Who seeks out all who are lost teaches us always: you can only get there by remembering who you are, and Whose you are, each and every day of your life. And if/when you get lost along the way, allow Jesus, the One in charge of “Lost and Found” to come to Jesus. That’s when you will know you’ve been truly found, and unconditionally loved.