

I. Homily – 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

II. “I do not know where you are from?”

A. Imagine your visit to a friend’s home.

1. Ok. Granted you came unannounced. He was not expecting you, but this is your best friend.
2. You have known him since you were in grade school. You went to high school together...even college.
3. Now, you live near one another and so you came to his door for a visit.
4. And, he hears your knock...and he responds simply... “I do not know where you are from?”

B. “I do not know where you are from?”

1. These words sting to the heart, because they are not simply a denial of knowledge of a person but a denial of one’s entire history.
2. They are a denial of all that came before as an individual presumes that there was a long and strong relationship developing and growing over the ages.
3. I would imagine that these words sting to the heart when a spouse utters it to another.
4. A seeming denial their history together. Their ups and downs...joys and sorrows.

III. When we place these words in the mouth of our Lord, they may baffle us when they are directed at us.

A. St. Augustine explains that although God created us without our help, he will not save us without our help.

1. We often presume that what follows automatically on this life is heaven.

2. And, yet, our Lord makes numerous cautions throughout scripture and preachers throughout the ages have taught us that we ought not presume on heaven.

B. Certainly, we know that our God is a loving God so much so that he is love and so, perhaps, hearing those words: “I do not know where you are from” directed toward those who would consider themselves his disciples may baffle us.

1. The reality, however, is that God requires that we cooperate with his saving will.

2. Eternal joy is, indeed, a gift, but not one that comes to us without our own effort as well.

3. It is true that we live in an entitlement culture and so perhaps we expect God to give us something for nothing or something for what we have determined is sufficient.

4. But, God knows well what is required of us to enter his heavenly kingdom.

C. The parallel of this passage in the Gospel of Matthew recounts our Lord offering these rhetorical statement:

a) *“Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you.'”*

b) *Our Lord is pointing out that many will try to justify themselves pointing out the wonderful things they have done for our Lord, but his response?*

c) *“I never knew you.”*

(1) These should be shocking words for us.

(2) Because it is a reminder that heaven does not necessarily follow on this life.

(3) There are other possibilities and the requirements.

IV. There was consternation generated by some over a document issued by the Vatican, by then Cardinal Ratzinger, back in the year 2000 which stated that Christ and the Church are necessary for salvation. The document is called Dominus Iesus.

A. What was stated in that document was nothing new, but, I believe, the reason that it was so shocking was that many of us had convinced ourselves that the requirements for heaven were quite minimal.

1. However, when we look at the examples of the saints, we do not find biographies that were mediocre.

2. We may find men and women who sinned, but all of them were quite adamant in repenting of their sins.

a) We do not find those explaining why the moral teachings of the Church did not apply to them or were not so serious as others might think.

b) If they had been unfaithful to a spouse, they stopped being unfaithful and did penance.

c) If they had broken their promises to a lifelong commitment, they did not advertize this fact on facebook. They went to confession and promised never to do it again.

d) Most certainly, if their lifestyle did not fit with the moral teachings of Christ and His Church, they most certainly did not say that Christ and His Church was wrong. They changed their lives.

e) Above all, the example of the saints whom we know are in heaven is the example of people who prayed and regularly celebrated the Sacraments: receiving communion and going to confession.

f) They were people who had an intimate relationship with Christ and His Church.

g) They were people who realized that the most important part of life is the part you do not see.

h) They did not tolerate contradiction in their lives, i.e., things that were directly contrary to their life in God. When something contrary entered their lives, they took measures to change it and rectify it.

i) The reason that the saints are saints is because they centered their lives and the lives of their children on God not in the commonplace but in an exceptional way.

B. What that document Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict taught, was not that all Catholics are saved and that non-Catholics cannot be saved as some commentators tried to portray.

- 1. The central point of the document is contained in its title: “Dominus Iesus” (The Lord Jesus).**
- 2. Our salvation depends on the Lord Jesus and His Body that is the Church.**

C. The document made many points, but this was central.

D. We should point out that the document did not say that all Catholics are saved simply because they are Catholic nor did it say that non-Catholics cannot be saved.

- 1. When the question about whether someone who is not Catholic can be saved. This is what the Pope wrote: “The salvific action of Jesus Christ, with and through his Spirit, extends beyond the visible boundaries of the Church to all humanity’ for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.” But “they acquire meaning and value only from Christ’s own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his.”**

E. The point here is that truth is one.

- 1. For millenia physicists have attempted to find that one central truth which sums up every other truth.**
- 2. They have known that truth is unique and simple, but what is that one truth.**
- 3. The one truth is Christ. Truth is one and this one truth is Christ.**
- 4. Therefore, anything that is true belongs to Christ.**
- 5. St. Thomas Aquinas exhorted: “Acknowledge the truth where it is found.”**

6. This means that wherever there is truth, it is salvific.
7. However, since the Church is not simply some organization but the Mystical Body of Christ, i.e., the Body of Christ Himself, then the Catholic Church contains the fullness of this truth. As the Second Vatican council restated and the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, the Catholic Church contains the fullness of the means of salvation.
8. The, then Cardinal Ratzinger, wrote: "Therefore the sacred books of other religions, which in actual fact direct and nourish the existence of their followers, receive from the mystery of Christ the elements of goodness and grace which they contain."
9. Does this mean that we are becoming syncrotists and should begin reading the Koran and the writings of Buddha?
10. That is not the point. The point is that whatever is true and saving in this world comes through Christ in a way known only to God.
11. Truth is one and the truth is Christ.

V. Know Christ and His Body the Church.

A. But, this knowledge cannot remain only a concept in our heads.

1. We must know him not simply as a buddy with whom you have a beer.
2. We must know him in the sense that His life flows through us and is in us. Christ comes to know us not only in ideas and concepts nor even just sentiments but in our very being.
3. We must make ourselves a home for the virtue of faith and cultivate in our very being the virtue of religion.
4. What do I mean?
 - a) *My point is that we must be like an athlete who not only has the idea of running faster in order to win the gold medal.*
 - b) *The athlete must not only think that he must run faster, but he must cultivate the virtue of running faster.*
 - c) *The must get our there and run and run harder and push himself until he reaches the finish line.*
 - d) *Even St. Paul gives us this example of running the good race.*

e) And, yet, even though that runner is getting out there and running, his ability to win the medal is still a gift.

f) He cannot reach the goal if God has not already given him the talent, the musculature, the food, the energy, the chemistry, even the spirit to make it happen.

5. This is how we are to run the good race to the finish in our lives. Eternal joy is a gift, but God requires our cooperation in receiving it.

B. This is why he gives himself to us in the Sacraments not only as an idea or a symbol but in His very being.

C. Don't let it stop there with only a passive reception.

1. Take that which the Lord has given you and cultivate your relationship with Him.

2. We must turn our hearts and minds daily to him and allow him to take charge of our thoughts and our actions.

3. We must invest ourselves in our faith not only for an hour a week but every moment of every day.

4. Let him make you into his image and likeness once again.

D. Finally, this solves the problem for us of standing outside the door, knocking and then hearing the words from inside: "I do not know where you come from?"

1. This dilemma is solved not simply by us realizing that the door is about to slam and so we must rush in.

2. The problem is solved by the fact that we never find ourselves outside the door.

3. We are always inside with him, because he is inside of us.