

I. Homily –Christ the King – November 20, 2011

II. Recently, while introducing the changes to the Roman Missal, someone reasonably asked why we must use such high language in the liturgy, because the apostles were just simple men who spoke in simple ways.

A. This indeed is the common impression and common wisdom isn't it: that the apostles were just simple fishermen who were minimally educated.

B. Not only is this an insult to fishermen, but not really accurate.

C. However, let's look at the words they wrote and used:

1. **“And the Word became flesh*and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.”**

a) These are the words written by St. John, the youngest of the apostles.

2. St. Peter, the prince of apostles, **“Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of [your] faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

3. Or St. James: **“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: all good giving and every perfect gift* is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”**

D. My friends, the apostles nor their disciples were simpletons. They likely knew the Torah by heart so that when our Lord spoke they immediately knew to what he referred in quoting the Old Law.

1. Further, as they received the Gift of the Holy Spirit and went out preaching the Gospel to the four corners of the globe, it seems clear that the Grace of the Holy Spirit and the needs they encountered in the people to whom they preached had an effect.
2. Their understanding of Jesus Christ and what His life meant for them and the world developed and deepened the more they reflected upon it.
3. It seems clear that they did not understand everything on the day our Lord gave His life on the cross; however, they came to understand more and more as they reflected on the revelation they had received.

E. The same is true of the Church over the centuries and the millenia.

1. There, indeed, was no new revelation after the close of the Apostolic Age as clearly defined by the Church...
2. However, there is what we call the development of dogma or the development of doctrine.
3. Through the ages as the Church has reflected on what was revealed in Jesus Christ the understanding of the Church has deepened and grown so much so that no one individual can exhaust the depths of our faith.
4. This means that our faith is something which our Lord intends all to embrace and something in which all are to be immersed, but our faith is never something which we should reduce to the lowest common denominator...we should never be encouraged to settle for the bear minimum.

F. More and more, however, I find that whereas we will make every other aspect of our lives complex and rigorous, we want to reduce our faith to the most simple terms.

1. Whereas we might spend hours researching the new tv and indoor theatre for our home, we must leave Mass right after communion or risk a 15 minute wait in the parking lot.
2. Whereas 10 years ago, Algebra was not taught until high school and calculus until college and now Algebra is taught in Jr. High and Calculus in High School, we are content with our children learning nothing more than the principle that God loves them when it comes to their faith even though fifty years ago a second grader would well have known not only that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist but what Transubstantiation is, what absolution is, what the precepts of the Church are and they certainly would have had all of their prayers memorized by the end of first grade...which is not the case today.

3. My friends, we have tended to settle for the bear minimum when it comes to our faith...because this only concerns our eternal salvation and not what we will be watching this evening on tv.

G. The prayers of the New Roman Missal reflect a change in attitude...they reflect the change that we are not going to settle for the bear minimum in our faith anymore.

1. They are meant to inspire us not to settle for the superficial meaning of the prayers but to look deeper.

2. And not to settle for the bear minimum in the way our faith is lived.

III. This applied to our liturgy today.

A. The fact that the apostles conveyed profound realities in what they taught 2000 years ago pertains not simply to the types of words they used but even more importantly it pertains to the content and intent of those words.

B. While we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, the whole idea of the King seated on his throne is indeed that he is a loving and merciful King, but He is also a King who is perfectly just.

1. The whole point of his kingship is not simply that he rules a material kingdom with big castles and treasure chests.

2. The whole point is that he is to reign in our hearts and our souls.

3. He desires to reign in our hearts so that we might have our eternal reward, but this reward requires that we allow him. He gives us freedom. We are entirely free.

4. Hence, he allows us to choose...in our daily actions.

C. The gospel passage we hear today from St. Matthew has our Lord teaching his disciples about the Last Judgment.

1. This is serious stuff.

2. In general, we have convinced ourselves that as long as we are nice to each other, then we will all go to heaven.

a) *I hear this often.*

b) And, maybe, we have begun to think it is true.

3. Our Lord, however, never said, "Blessed are the nice."

4. He never said, "If you believe in me, you will be wealthy and own your own house."

D. No. He said "Woe to you rich."

1. He said, "Take up your cross and follow me."

2. He said, "There is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend."

a) I don't know about you, but I would put "laying down your life for another" in a whole category above just being nice.

3. We may think that as long as we have not killed anyone, we will go to heaven...afterall God is mercy and love, but "thou shall not kill" is only one of the commandments and not even the first. Thou shall not kill comes fifth on the list of the commandments.

a) What commandments come before "thou shall not kill"?

b) "You shall not have no other gods before me."

(1) How many times have you chosen things over God?

c) "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain."

d) And, how about this one, "You shall keep Holy the Sabbath" which we call the Lord's Day, Sunday.

e) "Honor your Father and Mother" comes before "thou shall not kill."

(1) How attentive have you been to your aging parents?

f) He said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "thou shall not steal" or "covet" which we might relate not only to greed but also jealousy or envy.

4. He told us to pray always...how many of us take more than a few seconds in the car to offer a rushed prayer?

5. Indeed, Jesus taught us that we should not only not kill but should not be angry with our brother or sister and, hence, one might say that one should be nice...but our Lord does not stop there... He tells us that this is not enough.

E. When our Lord asks the question to those who have died on the last day about whether they had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked or visited those in prison, he was asking if they had actually ever inconvenienced themselves out of love for another or more importantly...out of love for Him.

1. He asks us not simply to be nice. He commands us to love Him with our whole mind, soul and heart and our neighbor as ourself.

2. Our neighbor is certainly first those closest to us, but our neighbor is also those who are not our family...not our close friends...and not the people whose company we enjoy.

IV. Can we be nice in and of ourselves?

V. What he is telling us is that something more is required.

A. Think for a moment what our Lord is going to ask you on the last day.

1. Do you think that God is going to ask us on the last day how many catches we had? How many tackles? How fast we sprinted the 100 or how many laps we can do.

2. Do you think he will ask us how many houses we had or what car we drove?

3. Do you think he will ask you where you lived? Or what kind of house you had?

B. On the other hand, do you think that he will ask you if you worshipped him on Sunday and in heart every moment of your life?

C. Do you think he will ask you if you prayed and turned your heart to him daily?

D. I think, he will ask us if we were covetous, greedy, jealous or envious.

E. He will ask us what came first in our life...I mean really first...not just what we say is first...where do we spend most of our money...on ourselves or on others. What came first: faith, family, country, school, sports, tv, entertainment in that order or sports, school, entertainment, family, country, faith in that order?

- F. Have you been a faithful husband or wife, father or mother?
- G. He will ask us if we have stolen from work and conducted business ethically.
- H. He will ask us if we have ever supported any organization that does not reverence life.
- I. He will ask us if we were open to life in every act of intimacy as husband and wife.
- J. He will ask us if we were diligent self-sacrificing in our vocation to married life, priesthood or religious life.
- K. He will ask us if we were generous in answering the Lord's call.
- L. He will ask us if we have been pure in heart, mind and body.
- M. Don't you think those will be the questions?

VI. Our Lord is here today to tell us that the final judgment is real and what he will consider important will go far beyond the question of whether we were nice or not.

- A. Nice can be faked, but love is something that resides in the depths of our souls.
- B. Goodness and charity are based in the truth.

VII. He warns us that we must invest ourselves as much in our faith as in everything else we do...indeed, moreso.

- A. But if we look at the time and effort we spend in so many pursuits...if we look at where we spend our time, talent and treasure...our faith so often comes up short...not just second or third or even fourth but sometimes near the very bottom of the list.
- B. What the apostles and evangelists wrote always invites us to strive for perfection in our faith, hope and love.

C. Our liturgy ever more is encouraging us to look deeper into the mystery of the Holy Trinity revealed to us by the Son.

D. As we approach the Season of Advent, let's take the opportunity to see where our faith ranks in our lives.