

Homily, 30th Week in Ordinary Time
10/28/18
Fr Danny

Today's Gospel is about sight. One of our senses. Sometimes we don't understand what it is that's in front of us - we don't use our senses properly. And so I want to tell you a story.

There was philosopher back in the old days whose name was Plato. Has anyone heard of Plato? He was a very famous Greek philosopher. And one of his most famous myths is called "The Myth of the Cave." Has anyone heard this before? Two. Awesome. Which means the rest of you get to hear this for the first time! So, the Myth of the Cave basically goes like this.

There once was a group of people that all that they knew in life was what was in front of them. They were chained to this wall, and their faces were set forward. They couldn't see to the left, they couldn't see to the right. All they could see was the wall in front of them. And on this wall, all they could see were shadows. Now they could hear voices, and they thought the voices came from the shadows because that was their only experience of life.

And what was going on was, they were actually sitting with their backs to a short wall, but behind that wall which they couldn't see, was a fire. And what they would see, the shadows in front of them, was people walking between them and the fire. They would see people walking in shadows, kind of like a puppet show, but that's all they knew as life.

Now one of these slaves who had been tied up, and this was his only experience of life, got loose. And when he got loose, he went behind the wall. Kind of like the old Wizard of Oz. "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!" But he goes back there, and he's blinded at first because he sees this fire, and he's afraid, because his whole existence had been based on his reality that all that existed was himself, the people chained next to him, and the shadows on the wall.

For the first time in his life, he had seen something new. Scary. New things can be scary. Change can be scary. And so, he was blinded by this bright light and eventually he gains his sight. But he's terrified. Extremely terrified. Now one of those workers who had been one of those who was walking by the fire, sees him, and says, "Oh, this is nothing, let me show you what's outside!" This former slave was terrified. "This is already blowing my mind. I can't understand the idea of outside because I've only known my little place in front of this wall looking at these shadows!"

He is forced to go outside and yet again he's blinded by the light because the sun is just so bright. He's terrified. But then eventually like when you go from being in a dark room to being outside, your eyes adjust, well it took him a few minutes, but then he started to see what started as shadows, then became figures, then he saw a mountain, and he saw the sun, and he saw water, and he saw all these trees, and these hills, and, "Oh my gosh this is beautiful! My whole life I thought all that there was in the world was these shadows in front of me." And he was filled with joy!

When someone has that mountaintop experience what does he want to do? He wants to share it! So what does that man do? He goes back to those people that only have that

experience of these shadows on the wall. And he starts telling them about the things that he saw. Tells them about the fire. Tells them about the sun. Tells them about all these amazing things that they could see too, if only they would allow themselves to be unshackled to what is right in front of them. In terror, they murder him.

Now the moral of that story is we don't like change. We don't like newness. We would much rather sit in our limited scope of the world that we see right now than dare to try something new. Than dare to see anything new. That's the world that we live in. We don't want to do anything new.

This las week the priests got together on Monday and Tuesday we had our clergy days which we have twice a year. And in the midst of that conference we were talking about the generation gap. But specifically, about the millennial generation. The generation that is blamed for everything in the world! But it's interesting that when we go through this, we see that it's nothing new.

As we hear in the book of Proverbs and in the book of Wisdom, there's nothing new under the sun. Everything that is happening now has happened before. Now, we may have new revisions of what those things look like. We haven't always had cars, we haven't always had airplanes, we haven't always had the technology that we have, but the same understanding has been going on forever. And the reality that we came to, the understanding that we came to was that the millennial generation gets along the best with the baby boomers. That Generation X gets along best with this current generation "Z."

Why is that? Because we all hate our parents but we I love our grandparents. Basically that is the conclusion that we came to. That we get along really, really well with our grandparents, but with our parents there's always a fight, there's always tension there. We can learn from this. I'm a millennial, and if I hold to that truth then anybody born from 1964 to 1980, I can't get along with. Well I disagree with that. I buck that notion and say that is not true. I can accept that many people see that as true, because that's what the reality around us says is true.

But I'm going to be like Bartimaeus in today's Gospel and instead say, "What is it that I am allowing to blind me?" And then go a step further and say to Jesus, "Lord I wish to have sight, Lord I wish to see." Many times we're scared of what we're going to see. We're scared of what that change will lead to. We're scared of truth. We want to seek truth, to know and understand truth, but we're afraid of what it may be. Because it may challenge us to change. And again, change is not a bad thing.

If the whole purpose for us in living this life is to go to heaven, then everything we do amounts to change. What's interesting is, up until the age of 7, we were doing ok. We were all living in the truth. For the most part we were living in love. For the most part, we didn't know what sin was until our parents told us about it, if they told us about it. And we couldn't be held responsible for what we did, because we were innocent.

And then we began to see differences in the world. We began to notice "us," and "them." Well, if you don't agree with me then you have to disagree with me, right? Logically, that's what our thought processes are. It's either right or wrong, black or white, yes or no. that's what the world tells us. The reality though is that there's a lot of gray in there.

And that's why some of the changes that have happened in the church in the last century and a half have happened. For those of you who grew up with the Baltimore Catechism,

raise your hands – from 1917 to 1973, it was: “question – answer, question – answer, question – answer,.” Very small book. For any of us born after 1975-ish, we didn’t really know about the Baltimore Catechism, except what we read in history books, if you went to a Catholic school.

But for those of us who did not grow up with the Baltimore Catechism, it’s easy to see the grayness in the world. That it doesn’t have to be yes or no. Sometimes it can be maybe. Sometimes it can be well, not this time, but maybe next time. That there can be some give and take. And that, to those who are Yes-or-no people can be one of the most terrifying things in the world.

The reason right now why we have the extreme left and the extreme right in the world, not just in the church, but in our political society, is because you have your “right-and-wrongs” and you have your “adaptabilities.” And those are polar opposites. Its’ either “yes or no” or it’s “Meh, we’ll figure it out.”

We’ve got to though, as with everything in life, come to a middle ground. But coming to a middle ground means calling people at both extremes wrong. But it also means calling them both “somewhat right.” Giving and taking. Allowing ourselves to be adapted into truth. That there is some truth on the left, and some truth on the right, but most of the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Now, I may be stealing this from the Benedictines, who are all about the *via media*, or the ‘middle way,’ but I think there’s some truth to this. That we are each called to see as Christ sees. Which means not to see the external, but to see the internal. That everything we do in life, if it is for the glory of God, if it is aspiring to go to heaven, then we’ve got to look below the surface and see Christ residing in our brothers and sisters, in our mothers and fathers, in those who have the same skin color and those who don’t. In those who have the same cultural background, and those who don’t. That God didn’t create a specific person in His image and likeness, He created each and every one of us in His image and likeness. That because of that we have dignity. Because that truth lies in each and everyone of us. That’s beautiful.

But many times it takes tearing down those walls, sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively, to see that truth. I’ve seen a wall tumble, in my lifetime. We were in Germany when the wall came down. I’ve seen the hatred that put that wall up, even though that hatred didn’t really exist when we were living there. But we’re seeing it again. If you don’t study history and learn from it, you’re doomed to repeat it.

I’m not saying we should build a wall or should not build a wall on our southern border, that’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about the walls of our hearts. Do we allow people in, and do we allow ourselves to break free from our hearts? Do we allow Christ in? It’s a difficult task, a difficult calling.

But each and every one of us that are here today are longing for something. Everyone here is longing for something, even if it’s for father to stop talking already! The truth is, the only thing that will ever quench that longing is the love of God. And it takes each and every one of us, each and every moment of each and every day to allow God to reside there. Because if He resides in our hearts, guess what? He’s going to reside in our ears, our eyes, and dare I even say He’ll reside in our mouths as well. That the words that come out of our mouths will be to glorify God rather than to divide His church.

That no matter what political party you belong to, with the elections in a week and a half away, no matter whether you’re a Democrat or a Republican, whether you’re Green Party,

or whatever, that that's not what defines you, my brothers and sisters. Being a child of God does. Remember we're called to put the Lord our God before everything not just somethings. To put the Lord our God before our political party, to put the Lord our God before our sports teams, to put the Lord our God before our patriotic duty (Now I'm getting into a really dangerous area, I understand!) One nation under God is what we live in, but do we recognize God in this nation anymore? Do we allow Him to help us make decisions, or do we fight against Him in every decision that we make?

Because unless love is that thing that guides our actions and our decisions, our choices and our votes, then we aren't putting God first, because God is love. So may our ears open today and our eyes be uncovered, and may our tongues be loosened, that we may hear the good word of God from His Scriptures, that we may see the love of God around us, that we may speak the love of God in every word we say, and dare I say that our hands and our feet may be always be used for God's greater glory, and not just for our own.