

Homily, 11/4/18  
31st Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Fr Danny

There is something that we do at Mass that has become kind of an automatic thing for us, and it really kind of goes with today's Gospel. When we say, "Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ," right before the Gospel, we cross our forehead, our lips, and our hearts so that we may have the word of God on our mind, that everything we speak may be full of grace because we are given speech from God and that God spoke creation into being, and that we may always have God in our hearts. It should not be a halfhearted gesture, but one done with reverence and intent, a true blessing of those gifts that we receive from God. Of the intelligence, of the ability to speak eloquently (yes, I'm using a ten-cent word at Mass!), and then of the ability to react and respond in every situation because God loves us.

When Moses gave us the Ten Commandments from God, they were split three and seven. The first three had to do with God, we learned this as children. That you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength with all your being as is echoed in today's Gospel. You shall keep holy the Sabbath. That you shall not have any graven images of God. If we follow all three of those, the next seven are really easy to do.

When Jesus summarizes these in today's Gospel, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, the remaining seven commandments are encompassed in that "love your neighbor as yourself." Because if you truly love God above everything else, and if you love yourself, it's easier to love everyone else. But it's difficult for us to really accept when we hear the word 'commandment'. We say, "You're not going to tell me what to do! I'm going to do whatever I want to." We have that rebellious teenager attitude within us, even when it comes to God, even when the whole reason that He gave us these 10 Commandments wasn't to restrict us, it was to free us from the shackles of sin and death.

If you want to live well and free, do these things, don't do these things. In everyday life we call that discipline. If you don't want to burn your hand, what do you not do? You don't put your hand in the flame! If you disobey that rule, you're playing with fire. We are literally playing with fire in our lives. That's what sin is. It's us going up to candles and putting our hand in the flame, then saying, "Ooh, that hurts!" Well, yes when you put your hand in the fire, it's going to burn.

But we don't think that way with sin. We think we can play with it all we want to, and "Oh well, I didn't kill anyone today" Good. But that's really a minimalistic way to look at it. Did you yell at someone, did you cuss at someone? Did you think bad things, did you think lustful thoughts, were you gluttonous? Did you lie, did you cheat, did you steal? What other things do we kind of look at as the minor sins?

I know in my upbringing, in my RE growing up, I think we were done a great disservice. Because we were told that there were two kinds of sin: there's mortal sin and there's venial sin. And venial sin, eeh, it's bad, but I mean, it's not *that* bad. But mortal sins: you cannot do these, you're going automatically to hell. There is some truth behind that, but I think we did a disservice to ourselves, because we minimized so much those venial sins.

But the reality, my brothers and sisters, is that sin is sin. A lie is a lie. There's no such thing as a white lie. "Oh, but Father, when my wife asks, does she look beautiful, I have to say yes." If you're lying then, that's a whole other issue. "But she did this, and this," and I said you can say, yes, she looks as beautiful as the day you married her. Internally. It's not a lie. There are ways of working around and still telling a truth.

What I'm saying is that white lies are still lies. We tend to justify them in our life. Well, I didn't tell the *whole* truth. "I swear to tell the truth the *whole* truth and *nothing but the truth*, so help me God." We can do that when it comes to the law of man, but for the law of God, wellllll, He understands. No. He doesn't. Because God is the way, the **truth** and the life.

In everything, we're called to have God in our minds, on our lips and in our hearts. To put the Lord first in our lives. But the world that we live in it's so hard to do so. There are so many distractions that we have in the world. There are so many other things that take up our priority.

Wherever you are in your relationship to God, I want you to start there. I don't expect you to be saints already, I want you to strive to be saints. And it's perfect that we have this Gospel right after celebrating All Saint's Day, right after celebrating all of the faithful departed on All Souls' Day. Because it's a reminder to us of their model of faith, that none of them were perfect. That none of you are perfect. Me, on the other hand, I'm definitely not perfect! I make a lot of mistakes.

What's interesting when about a mistake, is the only way you can grow is by *making* a mistake. That if you're always right and never wrong, you can never grow. Think about that for a second. If you're always right and you're never

wrong, you can never grow. Which means every mistake that you make is an opportunity for growth.

Failing out of college, as I've mentioned so many times now, was one of the best opportunities for me to grow and learn that I'm not perfect, I'm not always right and the world doesn't revolve around me. For many of us it takes those 'Come to Jesus' moments to really come to Jesus! Go figure. It takes us hitting that rock bottom to realize that the only way to be lifted up is by God, by His grace, by His mercy.

How much better would that experience be if we already had a relationship with God? If we turn to God not just in the low moments in our lives, but in every moment in our lives. That if we get something that's unexpected, we go to God and we say, "Thank you so much!" If we have a bad day, we say, "God, I need your help." If we have a normal blasé day, we say, "God for this normal blasé day, because it wasn't a horrible day."

We are called, my brothers and sisters, to give thanks to God for every gift in life, and some of the best gifts in life go unnoticed. Some of the best gifts in life go unthanked. We are reminded in the Scriptures, to give thanks to God for everything. It says in the Scripture, "There's no greater love, says the Lord, than to lay down your life for your friends." It's all based on this teaching that we have from Our Lord today. That if we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength and we love our neighbor as ourselves, then we will risk our own mortality for the immortality to come.

I was listening to NPR yesterday, (yes, I can occasionally listen to smart people radio). And I was listening to this story about this stranger that was on the subway. As he was there with his two little girls, he saw this guy kind of go into a seizure, and the guy fell onto the tracks. And he was like, uuuhh, there's a train coming. He could hear the whistle, he could see the lights. He didn't think. He heard a voice tell him, "Don't worry about your girls, don't worry about what's going on, this is what you're called to do." So he jumps onto the tracks. And he tries to pick the man up but his hand slips, tries to pick him up again but his hand slips, tries to lift him bodily up, but he can't manage. And the train gets closer and closer. So eventually he lays on top of this man, and the train goes over them. And the train just grazes the back of his calves. They're safe, they make it through.

Later he was telling the reporter about this story, he said, "I always kind of wondered why, when I had that gun to my temple and I pulled the trigger, it didn't go off. Now I know why. Because I was supposed to be here this day to save this man's life." And I got chills.

That is how we're called to live, my brothers and sisters. For each other. Not only for ourselves. But it takes sacrifice. The same sacrifice that Christ offered for each and every one of us on the Cross. To lay down our lives for our sins and for others'. In today's second reading that there's the juxtaposition between a priest a Levitical priest, and Jesus the High Priest. Well, we have to have a lot of priests, because they die. But there's the one High Priest though who died once and for all.

The Levitical priest first offered sacrifice for his own sin, so that he would be able to offer sacrifice for the sins of his congregation. But Christ did that in one moment for eternity. It reminds me of the conversation we've been having ever since I got here, about Confession.

Why do I go more often? Because if I don't receive grace, I can't give grace. Now God's grace isn't dependent on me, but if I don't experience God's grace, you won't see God's grace through me and you won't want to search it out either. It reminds of the reality that we are each going to die. I'm going to die someday. You're going to die someday. Your mothers your fathers, your aunts and uncles, your cousins your children will die someday.

And yes, that's a sad thing, but only to an extent. Why? Because only through death can we reach life. Just as only through mistakes can we grow, only through the mistake of sin can we be absolved from sin. Only from the mistake in the garden did we need Christ. And Christ gave himself freely for us, my brothers and sisters. He loves us because He's God. That's just who he is. Despite your sins, despite your failures, despite your mistakes, God loves you.

Love one another. Love each other! Love God. And then those shackles to sin that we have can be truly dispelled. We won't have to allow sin to rule our lives. But instead the love of God. As we hear another time in Scripture, there's nothing more powerful than the love of God. But we have to choose it and then we have to use it for it to be fruitful. So my brothers, love God, love your neighbor, love yourselves, and I'll see you in heaven!