

Homily
First Sunday of Advent
12/2/18
Fr Danny

I must admit when I was preparing the homily this weekend, there was one phrase that really jumped out at me, maybe because I'm a Star Wars fan, "It's a trap! It's a trap!" We fall into the trap of daily life, we fall into the trap of secular society. We fall into the trap of becoming comfortable with life. My brothers and sisters, we don't have to fall into that trap. That's something we choose.

The only time in my life where there was a trap I was in that I didn't choose was when I took a class at OU. They thought it would be really funny and kind of cool to see how much we trusted one another. So they put me at one side of the room, and my partner at the other side of the room, and blindfolded me. (It gets better.) There was a field of mousetraps between the two of us, and I had to follow instructions to get to the other side without setting off any traps. Needless to say, I'm glad I wore steel toed boots that day! There were traps going off everywhere. And this one would hit that one and set it off, and that would hit another one...

And that many times, is how sin invades in our lives. Satan lays these traps for us because he knows where our desires are, he knows where our intention does lay and doesn't lay. And he wants us to fall into these traps. Why? Because if we fall into sin, we aren't falling into the position of love. We aren't seeking out holiness, but instead seeking to have some holes within us. And that many times, is the trap that satan lays for us.

I was reminded last night that sometimes in life, we get really upset at God. We get mad at God because He says, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened," and so we ask, we seek, and we knock, and we hear: nothing. "I want to do your will, tell me what to do!" I think many times we fall into the trap that we think that God's will is specific. It's not.

One of the struggles I had in seminary during my own discernment was "Well is it God's will for me to get married, or God's will that I become a priest? I

don't want to make the wrong choice because if I do, (the worst fear that we all have) I'm going to go to hell."

But that's not how God works. God doesn't punish us for making the wrong decisions, especially with our lives. Having talked with some of the guys last night at the Kairos retreat last night, it reminded me, because many of them are juniors and seniors looking for what their life goal is, whether they're supposed to be going to college, what it is that they are to study. They are so paralyzed by the fear of making the wrong decision, that they make no decision. Anybody else fall into that?

But it's only when we let go of our insecurities, and we allow God to be God, that we can truly avoid those traps that we are laying before ourselves. The trap that says that if I make the wrong choice, A. I'm damned for all eternity and B. I'm stuck with it forever.

My mom, two years ago said, "You know, I'm 62 years old, and I'm still trying to figure out what I'm supposed to do as an adult." I said, "Mom, you've been an adult for 40 years." She said, "I'm still trying to figure out what God's calling me to." And I said, "Haven't you figured that out by now?" and she said, "No. I know I've found some jobs that I that I enjoy and some jobs that I definitely don't enjoy." But God, every day, calls us to something different.

Because at the end of the day, what God is calling each and every one of us to isn't a specific plan, but a specific purpose. I think we get those confused. The purpose in life is to seek out holiness. The plan to get there is different for each and every one of us, and it changes. There are some relationships in life that bring us closer to God, for moments in our lives. And then some that bring us further from God, for moments in our lives. We fall into the struggle or trap that everything has to be this way forever.

One of the most common phrases that I hear from people is, "Man when I was growing up it was so much different, it was so much better." The irony is that when we are growing up we say, "Man I can't wait till it gets better." The grass is always greener on the other side, even if we passed that grass before. As Justin Bieber says, "The grass is only greener where you water it." Or as Christ says in Scripture, "Where your treasure is, there also is your heart."

And so when we're looking at beginning Advent, this new liturgical season, (Happy New Year, by the way) it's an opportunity for us to start differently. To look at God not as this judge, jury and executioner that's looking at our little scruples and saying "Hah, you messed up that one time, that one day. You're going to hell!"

That's not who our God is! Our God is loving. But I think we've forgotten about that along the way. We're taught as children that God's love is unconditional. But the older we get we put conditions on God's love. "Well, God can only love me if I do the perfect thing. God can only love me if I don't sin. God can only love me if, if, if..." NO! God loves you despite every way that you try and get out of it. There's nothing that we can do that can decrease the amount of love that God has for us, and that is the joy of the season. That is the joy of the Gospel, that God loves you despite your sins.

Because God loves us, He's always calling us to repentance. He's always calling us to reconcile our relationship with Him. Reconciliation. There's a reason that I prefer that term over confession. Because that's what it's about. The sacrament isn't about saying, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth (except for the things that I don't want to talk about and the things that I forgot.)" No, it's about making our relationship with God better.

And how do we do that? By recognizing that we aren't perfect. By humbling ourselves before God and by seeking out His love in every action word deed and desire that we have. What do those three things lead toward? Holiness. That is the universal call that all Christians have. The universal call to holiness.

My brothers and sisters, as we continue through this Advent season, may we truly prepare room in our hearts and our lives in our very beings to receive the Lord every day. Not just at Christmas. But every morning when we wake up, may our first thought be "Thank you God, because You didn't have to let me wake up today." And our last thought be "Thank you God for this day. It wasn't perfect, and there were some moments that we really bad today, but all in all I'm happy to be above ground. We may be more thankful in our lives for all the gifts that God gives us.

One more thing, and I'll end with this: remember the only way to get to Heaven is to die. That's hard for us, the reality of death. The reality though, is that

everyone someday will die. Don't run from it. Live your death. Because every moment could be your last, as Christ has been telling us these last few weeks.

That's not a bad thing. Yes, we want to live here as long as we can, we want to grow, to learn things. We want to love. But if we're living here and not growing and we're not learning, and we're not loving, we aren't truly living out our death. We aren't truly living out the eternity that we're looking forward to. We aren't living out that heavenly reality that we're all yearning for. Most of us instead are just kinda walking that line... I'm not going to fall into hell today...

The praxis of living out those two realities is different. One brings joy, the other brings depression, and sadness and loneliness. So let us lift each other up with that joy that comes from the Gospel. Let us love one another and seek holiness as a community of faith.

I was reminded this last week about how in today's world we have so many people who are spiritual but not religious. You know who else is spiritual but not religious? Satan. Satan is spiritual but not religious. He believes that God exists, he knows that God exists, he just rejects Him.

In the beginning God created man and woman that man not be left alone. Because when we're left to our own devices, we're going to fail. Not just men, but humanity. If we are left to our own devices, we will fail. We need a community of faith. Because if we're left in a vacuum, we cannot grow. We must have others to learn from, others' experiences to learn from, and others to tell us when we're getting it wrong, even though we don't want to hear it. But that's what the life of holiness is about. Seeking out God's love, learning how to live it, and following His plan of holiness and righteousness, and truth.