

Homily

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fr Danny

“The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.” That’s one of the most natural tongue twisters in Scripture. What is Jesus trying to say here? Well it’s pretty much the same thing that He told us in the perfect prayer? What’s He tell us in the perfect prayer? “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Sometimes in our lives we forget that very important two letter word – AS. It’s very important for us to remember that when we pray the Our Father, when we pray the prayer that Jesus gave to us, we are telling God to have mercy on us as we have mercy on those around us. To forgive us as we forgive those around us. To love us as we love those around us.

Thanks be to God that He ignores us sometimes! Because IF God had mercy on us, forgave us, and loved us as we love others our world would be pretty much condemned at this point. It’d be even worse than things are in the world today. But thanks be to God, He loves us MORE than we love others. He has mercy on us more than any of us will ever deserve, and He offers us forgiveness every time we seek it out in the sacrament of Reconciliation. That’s how loving our God is.

But when Jesus is talking about the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, He’s not talking about this life, He’s talking about the life to come. Many times we’re so focused on this life that we forget that this isn’t what things are about. We’re so focused on comfort, we’re so focused on making sure that all the bills are paid on time, and everything is good, and just in case something happens we’ve got that rainy-day fund somewhere. We forget that our treasures that we’re called to store up are not for here, but they’re for Heaven. That reminder that the Benedictines always give us, “live always with death before your eyes” because when you die, you can’t take any of the stuff that you’ve accumulated over time with you.

I tell that to my parents all the time. I tell them that one of the best that ever happened to us was our house getting hit by a tornado. Because that way they finally got rid of 30% of the stuff that they never needed.

Trosky’s are the family heirloom. Do you guys know what Trosky’s are? The little collectable things? They’ve got walls and walls and walls. “What are you going to do with this when you die?” “You get to figure that out!” But in many times these things that we hold so valuable in our lives, we think we couldn’t live without, like my mom’s spoon collection. How many spoons do you really need? “Well I’ve only got 642.” “Really? you counted?” “Ehh643, close enough.” We have all these things that we put all of this focus on, all of this attention in our lives, and we forget the most important thing most days. And the most important thing in our lives both for this life and the life to come, isn’t things, but relationships.

That’s why everything that Jesus talks about in today’s gospel speaks of relationship. At the heart of relationship is communication and love. He tells us, it’s easy to love your best friend. It’s easy to love those who love you, it’s hard to love those who hate you. It’s hard for the rape victim to love the

rapist, it's hard for the victim of a robbery to love those who have robbed them, it's hard for the murder victim's family to have any mercy, let alone love for those who've murdered their loved ones.

That's what God's calling us to. It's a difficult task. In the midst of everything going on in the church right now, that reminds me that I'm called to love my brother priests who have let us down. I'm called to love the bishops who have hidden things. I'm called to love everyone in every circumstance, whether I agree with what they've done or not. I'm called to show them love and mercy. Because God first shows me love and mercy in my life. That's difficult. In this day and age, it's hard for us to love those who've done such egregious seemingly unforgivable things.

To the law, yes, definitely unforgivable, but if we seek out God's mercy there's only one thing that's unforgivable. Remember that. There's only one sin that's unforgivable. And it's not murder, it's not rape. It's not any of the things that we normally put in that list. The only unforgivable sin is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And I remember hearing that when I was growing up, and I said "ok, what does that mean?" We hear that term, Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, what does God mean by not being able to forgive blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

Pretty much what that is, is the sin of saying "God, you don't have the power and authority to forgive my sin, so I'm in my pride, not going to ask for it." That's blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Taking the authority that the Holy Spirit has and saying, "You don't have the power to do this." Anything else can be forgiven by God, and will be forgiven by God, if we ask Him. But remember there's a caveat there. Just because it's forgiven, doesn't mean that there's not a temporal punishment that goes with it.

Every sinful action that we perform has some form of culpability for it. If you steal something and you get caught, you're going to get in trouble. If you kill someone unjustly, you're going to get in trouble, and there are punishments that go along with those actions in this life. We have to remember that. When Jesus was talking about loving our enemies, He wasn't saying to love them and let them get away with it. No, my brothers and sisters, that wasn't what He was saying. He says love the person, hate the sin.

The problem is, we have become so inundated with sin in our lives that we hate the sin, and we define the person as their sin and we then hate the person as well. We can't do that anymore; we shouldn't have done it in the first place. But at some point, the problem was we started listening to the wrong "angel on the shoulder." Think about those old cartoons; in those old movies where you've got the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other.

The problem is, that's attributing too much power to satan. He doesn't have that much power. He doesn't! The only power and authority he has in our lives is what we give to him. Let me repeat that. The only power that satan has in your life is the power *that you give to him*. Remember, satan is not equal with God. They're different.

We don't believe in an evil, vengeful God, and a loving God, and they're competing all this time. No! God is God, satan is not! That's why satan was cast into hell away from Heaven. Because he wanted to be God, and thought God made the wrong decisions. That when God decided to make humanity above the angels, Satan said 'wait a second, I'm an angel! I have all these great things. They can't do these things. They are below me, they should be subservient to me. Since You have made this choice, You are wrong, and I am right. In other words, You are not God, and I am"

That's what satan's big mistake is. His sin is believing that God is not God. He knows that God exists. He believes in god. He believes in the power of the Holy Spirit. He believes in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He just says it's not good enough. And that it's wrong.

The irony is, the biggest lie he's taught us in our lives is that he exists and that God doesn't. Or even more, that neither God nor satan exist. That's the world we live in, where we're 'spiritual but not religious.' That's the role that he's trying to sell to us. That if God doesn't exist, and if satan doesn't exist, then you can do whatever you really want to, and it really doesn't matter. That, get your wealth here, because that's what really matters in this life.

But when you look at the happiness charts out there, and the different psychological experiments, and different tests, money does not equal happiness. We see that time and time again in the news. Some of the unhappiest people are some of the wealthiest people in the world. That money and happiness don't have a relation, much less a causation. "X amount of money means I'll have this amount of happiness." Then I should be miserable! But I'm not.

As I've been talking about these last 35 days, the more I haven't focused on myself as far as the things that I've attached to my life, like the tv, the video games, the social media, buying things for myself, drinking alcohol, having snacks. Taking away all those things attached to my life, I felt "well there's nothing left there!" I was miserable the first week, and I mentioned it was really, really hard to go through this process. Then I realized, wait a second, this has freed me up to do so many other things. I'm building puzzles now! I never thought I'd be a puzzle guy, but I really enjoy it. It's very cathartic. If you haven't done it...For my mom, I'm trying to get her onto puzzles off of solitaire. Because at least puzzles you can do with someone else. But what I've found is, it's very cathartic, finding that one piece and putting it together. When you think everything is lost, and you find that one corner piece that you've been looking for.

That's what God's trying to give us with everything in our lives. But we're so distracted by everything else, that we can't quite see how the picture is supposed to form in front of us. And so one of the things that God has given to us as a way to kind of give back is this parish. God has given us this parish as a blessing. As we know, we continue to grow. That any time the bishop talks about growth in this diocese, he talks about this parish. I take pride in that. That's pretty fantastic. Because if we remember about 10 years ago, this church would be about half full. And growth was never even on the radar. Now there have been a lot of extenuating circumstances that have added to the growth: the unfortunate closing of Our Lady of Fatima, and the closing of the church in Luther years before that, and the east side of Oklahoma City growing. Yes, those things were bad (except for the growing of course). But the reality is we have a great church family today, and that's something to rejoice in.

But as members of this parish we're also members of a bigger organization. I hate to say organization, because it makes it sound way too business like, way too legalistic. But as a member St Robert Bellarmine, as a member of Corpus Christi, we're also members of the diocese.

I can remember certain parishioners of both parishes that occasionally when I'm gone, the priest that we have that comes and celebrates Mass for us – some people love, some people don't. What I tell the ones who come and say to me "Oh Father, please don't get him to come and cover for you anymore!" My response is, "Well, we've gotta get somebody. And we only have so many priests in our diocese, and they're not getting any younger. In fact, if all 24 of the guys we have in seminary all go on

and get ordained in the next 8 years, we're still going to have a net loss of around 16 priests in 10 years. It's crazy. Which means we're going to have to continue to import more priests from other countries. We're still a mission diocese. But that means that, right now I've got three assignments, in 10-15 years, I'm going to have 5. They're going to add Chandler and Stroud to this at some point. So, if you think it's bad to have me here, and at Corpus, and at McGuinness, now, imagine with Chandler and Stroud added in, we'll be lucky to have Mass here twice a month.

That's the reality that we live in. And there are two ways that I propose to address this problem. One: Give me your sons. I was talking to my brother last night about this, and he said "Danny, you can't say that!" I said, "What do you mean I can't say that?" "Well you can't force a vocation on anyone!" I agree completely. What I'm saying is, talk to your sons. If you have a son, if you have not talked to him about the possibility of him becoming a priest, you have not done your duty as a parent. If you have a daughter, and you have not talked to her about the idea of a religious vocation, you have not done your duty as a parent! I'm not saying you have to push them into it, you have to force them. We don't want someone's who's been forced into anything. That's not what I'm saying. That's not a loving response. What I'm saying is we want people to prayerfully have that as an option.

Fifty years ago, when the average Catholic family was 3-5 kids, or more like 5-10 kids, one of the kids would normally become a priest. And parents and grandparents would be excited about this. But now, when the average family is 1.375 kids..(how do you have 0.375 of a kid...) we don't want our sons to become priests, because then we won't become grandparents. No priests, no sacraments. Few priests, few sacraments. And that's one of the solutions that we have is to encourage and foster vocations.

Our Knights of Columbus do a great job, at every parish that we have, they are able to support financially some of the guys in seminary. because believe it or not, if priests get nothing, I don't know how I made it through seminary. The first four years in seminary, their stipend (I use that word loosely), is \$100. A month. When they get to theology, \$300. A month. Most of us can't live on \$300 a week. \$600 a week. For many families, that's very meager living. \$100 a month. So we then rely on organizations like Knights of Columbus who help us financially so that they can drive back and forth, because they don't get ministry miles, like we do as priests. So if they're going to go to seminary, and our closest seminary is 540 miles from here, you drive there and back, you're spending about \$70 on gas, even with gas around \$2 a gallon.

So they go back and forth about once a month, after their stipend, that's \$30. Not much to live on. And so one of the things the diocese does every year, and we do it because we don't have a better way of doing it right now, is our Annual Catholic Appeal. And I mentioned this last year in this homily as well. Our largest line item in the diocesan budget every year is seminary education. 24 seminarians, \$50,000 a year, for education, per seminarian. You're looking at \$1.2 million for our seminarians to just go to school. It's got to come from somewhere. And so we have the Annual Catholic Appeal for that.

Now you may say to me "Well, ok, Father, we just did this huge Capital Campaign. We just finished this 7 months ago. How is this different?" This is different because we have to pay the bills this year. The Capital Campaign is setting us up for the future, with the endowments that are being set up, there, so that we don't, hopefully, have to do this in the future. One of the revelations that Peter Dekeraty gave to us was that our Catholic diaticum, which is the capital tax that each parish pays to the diocese, is the lowest in the US. We're at 3-6 %, below 10% of our weekly tithe, goes to the diocese.

Do you know what the US average is? 17-20% of the weekend collection to the diocese. We're looking at that, our annual budget, roughly \$200 thousand that we get through the Annual appeal, we're looking at a difference that's huge. The diocese is asking us for the same goal that we had last year. And I have no fear or doubt in my mind that we'll meet it because as long as I've been here, we've met every goal and exceeded it. One of the reasons that the bishop specifically talks about our parish is because we're always among the top 5 most generous parishes based on our goals. And that's awesome. I want us to continue that generosity.

So I ask that right now, you please pass down the envelopes that are at the end of each pew. Work through it, fill it out. It's got English on one side, Spanish on the other. And look through this. If our goal is \$15,000 for this year, and we have roughly 150 or so parishioners, if every parishioner gave \$10 a month, if every single person gave a total of \$100, we'd hit our goal. Now with that being said, a lot of our people are minor people, who are awesome; we love our children. Because they are the future of our parish. But because of that, and that some of us have more resources, have to step up for our kids. Have to step up for those families who have kids. Because as you know, the bigger your family, the less to go around. So if you have that ability and that opportunity, please give generously.