

Homily
9/16/18
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Deacon Rich

My Brothers and sisters, today's Gospel reading, we have heard it many times, we know it by heart. No surprises, right? But I'd like to share with you if I could, a couple points.

First the point where Jesus says, "Who do the people say that I am?" Very important question. The second item I'd like to share is also a statement. But a statement said much more forcefully. "Get behind me, satan!" Two very important sentences in this very short Gospel reading.

The first, "Who do people say that I am?" One of the interesting things, if you really pay attention, throughout the New Testament, is that when you look at Jesus and how He relates to the people around Him, He never, ever, really says to anybody, anything else other than "I am the Son of the Father. The Father sent Me. Through Me you can get to the Father." And all of these things that we know that He has said, and we have heard over and over and over, point to one very important point: Jesus claims divinity. He doesn't ask the apostles, "Well, how did my speech or my homily or my parable go over with the people? Do you think they got it?" He doesn't ever ask that. He doesn't ask, "What kind of an impression do you think I had with the people now that I raised someone from the dead?" He doesn't ask that kind of question. Even though he could. No. He focuses on what? Who do people say I am?

My brothers and sisters, when you look throughout history, on this earth, there are several major religious groups that make up the overwhelming majority of the population. And they were all founded by individuals. Look at for example, Buddha. Buddha was a wise philosopher. Early on in his life he started guiding people on a trail of life. How to find balance in life. And throughout all of his teachings he

kept telling his followers “Don’t pay attention to me, pay attention to the way that I am describing that we ought to live.” He kept putting himself down. “I am not what is important here. It is how you live the way.”

Then we have Mohammed. After Jesus. Mohammed was an illiterate man. He was a second or third son of a family which in that culture means not a whole lot of great things were expected of him. But he received a vision and he took what he received in a vision, and he had it transcribed into a book. And throughout his life, never once did Mohammed think of himself as a great person. He knew that he wasn’t. But his focus was “Pay attention to the word of God as it is written in the Koran.”

And then we have Confucius. He was a very intelligent philosopher and statesman. Focused predominately in the China area. What did he do? He was so brilliant that he created a way of thinking and a way of being with the people. He was a sage a wise old man. But like buddha before him, Confucius kept telling his people, “I am not important. Listen to the words that I share and try to make them part of who you are.”

Now between those three founders of the great religions we have Jesus showing up. And unlike the three of them He says, “I am what’s important here. It is I, Me Myself, that you need to pay attention to. What I tell you is great, but not nearly as great as I am. For I am the Son sent by the Father and if you wish to get to the Father you must come through Me.” That, my brothers and sisters is a radical, radical change from what the world knew from the world’s great religious founders.

And then we have the second sentence. Get behind me satan! Wow! What a statement to lay upon your number one apostle! the guy you have picked to lead the disciples after you are gone. And then in front of everybody, He turns and says, “Get behind me satan!” Talk about a major slap down! And what was really interesting was that He didn’t call him a demon, He called him satan.

How often do we hear, from any ambo or church anyone talk about the devil? We don't talk about the devil. It makes people feel bad. It means there might be another option out there that people don't want to consider.

But guess what, my brothers and sisters? We are all subject to sin. And because we are subject to sin, and how we handle our "concupiscence" our tendency toward sin, has a great deal of influence as to the decision that God makes when we are judged. People today like the 'touchy feely, everything is cool, let's smile, we're all going to go meet Jesus in paradise.' And I don't care whether or not I'm a sinner. I don't have to worry about it.

It doesn't work that way. Jesus identified the devil by name. Satan! He exists. He is out there. And my brothers and sisters we have a choice. Throughout our lives, we make choices. And how those choices work out will have a major part as to whether or not we get up close and personal with Jesus, or we get up close and personal with satan. That is a reality.

Now in closing, I am no different than anyone else. I have had my times when I have been so tempted that I've had emotional and mental struggles with myself. 'No, I really shouldn't do this. Lord help me I don't want to do this, it's wrong, but boy there's another part of me that, Yes you do! Yes you do!' And you know, I think Jesus helped us a little bit today in what He said to Peter. Maybe we could use Jesus' words when we are faced with those moments that we're really tempted, maybe we might want to consider saying this ourselves: "In the name of Jesus, get behind me, satan!" We have to say, "In the name of Jesus," because we have no power over satan. We can refuse satan, but Jesus does have that power to banish satan. In the name of Jesus, get behind me satan. It has worked for me, maybe it will work for you as well.