

Homily  
2 September, 2018  
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Fr Danny

Have you ever been to a meeting where people have great ideas to do things, but when asked who wants to do them, there's silence? We have a lot of ideas, a lot of concepts that come up. But when it comes to action, well, we're a little more tentative. It was the same way with the Apostles at times, it's the same way with all Christians throughout history. And why is that? Why is it difficult for us to be doers and not just listeners of the word?

Well, Jesus is calling us to be doers. To not just talk about things but to go out and take that extra initiative. To pray, To fast. To give alms. These three things we are called to do in every moment of our lives. In a very specific way, the bishop has asked us all in the wake of everything that is going on with the priest scandals that are going on in the U.S., he's calling everyone: priests, deacons, bishops lay men and women to pray, to repent, and then to have conversion of heart. We are all called to do so because sin begins with us. We are all sinners. We all sin.

When I talk to people about sin, they say, Yeah, I sin, I cuss, I lie once in a while, I mean, I tell my wife she looks beautiful when maybe she shouldn't wear that dress...there's different things. But I mean, I haven't killed anybody, I haven't raped anybody, I haven't committed adultery, do I *really* need to go to confession? YES! Why? Because those little sins, they build up. Those little sins that come from within, those are what defile us. Those are what make us blind to the fact that we are sinners.

But when we look at Jesus, many people that I've talked to, when talking about salvation history, and the need for Christ and His cross, don't understand that we need Christ and His sacrifice to be saved. The reason that we struggle with that sometimes, is we don't realize what we need to be saved from. "I mean, I haven't sinned, I haven't done anything egregiously bad, so do I really need to be saved? I mean, I just cussed a little bit, I just sped a little bit, I just ran a couple red lights. It's not that bad, right?" Not that bad, until running that red light gets you in an accident where injuries happen and even death can happen.

Those small things can add up, and as Christ reminds us, it's from within our hearts, when we don't have that peace, of God where He's calling for us to invite Him in. It's from within our hearts that wickedness can come. Not that it has to come from our hearts, but sometimes it does. Evil comes from our hearts: unchastity, in our world today, you can't turn on the TV and not see something oversexualized. You can't turn on the radio, unless it's Christian radio, and not hear something oversexualized. I had a parishioner come to me yesterday with a new Ariana Grande song, saying, "Hey, Father, they're talking about God in here!" I said, let's look at the lyrics...and see how much they really are talking about God here. They were not talking about God in that song!! But we hear key terms, and think yeah this is good. But let's go a little further. Let's investigate this. Let's see whether this is really good. That's what Jesus is calling us to.

And He goes on: theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. Just a list of sins come out. "Oh, well I don't have any of those!" -Pride much? It's not on the list, but He's calling us to check. We're called to have humility of heart. It's difficult for us at times because that means we have to actually look at ourselves truly. We have to look at ourselves and realize we're not as perfect as we think we are. I'm not as perfect as I portray myself to be. I am a sinner. Not to go as far as Martin Luther did where we are just worms that have no value. That's not true at all. Because we do have worth and value. But it doesn't come from our actions. It doesn't come from our desires, our thoughts, our deeds. That worth and value comes from the fact that God loves us. And that's what we're called to rely on.

In these dark days that we live in, in this culture of death that we live in were called to rely in hope on God's love. In hope on his promise that evil will not prevail against the gates of heaven. And that God will win the final battle. The struggle, that I mentioned last week and somewhat the week before is that Satan is winning a lot of these skirmishes. We're allowing him to come in and separate us, to divide us more and more.

Because if we're unified, if we come together truly as the Body of Christ, nothing can stand up against us. Satan knows that, so he tries to put chinks in the armor of the Body of Christ. "Well these priests these horrible people have done these egregious sins." Yes, they have. They were egregious sins. But so have teachers, so have loved ones, so have family members. To different degrees, yes, of sin. But sin nonetheless. I'm not trying to let the priests off the hook, not at all. That's not to let the causers of the pain of the victims off the hook, that's not what I'm saying.

But we have to ask as I asked last week: What part of sin do I participate in? How is the uncleanness of our own hearts contributing to the evil in the world? Sin is evil. We've got to look at what we're doing, what we're saying. What we're passing on. Satan has even divided our country. If you're not a Republican, you're a Democrat; if you're not a Democrat, you're a Republican, and if you're in the middle, you don't matter. You don't count. And it's one side versus the other, and how dare you be a Republican and vote for a Democrat or a Democrat and vote for a Republican? That's blasphemy! They're both right. And they're both wrong.

Whether you're a Democrat, Republican, Green Party, whatever party you're from we're called to live everything for the greater glory of God. To hold up the dignity of human life in the face of hatred. No matter what party we belong to. No matter which way we vote. Humanity has dignity because it is from God from conception until natural death. It is interesting about a month ago when the pope came out and said that there is no reason for the death penalty to exist, many people just threw up their arms and said, "What are you talking about?" What about people who have done such egregious things? They have no dignity! Well, they have dignity, they've just done some heinous things. They have dignity, they've just committed horrible sins.

Our dignity cannot be lessened. The only way our dignity, our value can be lessened is if it is attributed only to ourselves. But it's not. Our dignity, our worth and our value come from the fact that God loves us. And that what we've been talking about these last few months. You are not your sins. But that means others are not their sins either. But they are sinners, as we are. And so we are called to forgive one another, to love one another, and to allow our hearts to be converted.

I have to admit, these last few weeks, it's been hard to just be a priest. It's been hard hearing the different stories that have been going around, the priest in Chicago who was not only spat on but was choked to within an inch of his life, just because he was a priest. Just because some of his brothers had committed egregious sins. That's hard to bear. There was a Facebook story from another priest who was talking about not wanting to put on his collar that day, because he knew that if he did, he would automatically be scrutinized. (Then there's Fr Danny who goes to the Choctaw Oktoberfest wearing his collar on. And he gets these looks. The priest is drinking beer? (Catholic-Irish Catholic at that.)

It's difficult sometimes though no matter what hats we wear. It's difficult to be parents. trying to raise your children in a world that teaches hatred. That teaches violence that doesn't want you to love. It's hard to be children in a world that the normal family structure as we know it: a mother and father actively involved in a family is now the rarity instead of the norm. It's hard to live in these days.

So we're called to look back and say, what are we doing about it? Are we praying daily for our spouses? as I mentioned earlier? For our children? For our priests? For our teachers? For our government officials? For everyone who we come in contact with?

This last week I went to confession and I was given one of the harshest penances that I'd ever been given. I was told, Father, go do a Holy Hour. I'm an extrovert, with ADD; sitting in front of the Blessed Sacrament for an Hour in silence is one of the hardest things in the world for me to do. But it

was one of the most blessed Holy Hours I'd ever had in my life. Because I knew that it was because of my sins that I was being given this opportunity to make up for them in this small way.

And so in a very intentional way, I did it. I didn't put it off. I did it immediately. I just sat in the church at Corpus Christi. And it was one of the most amazing Holy Hours of my entire life. I realized that God loves me, even though I'm a sinner. And that my role as a priest is to pray for everyone that I come into contact with, and not just say, oh I'll pray for you, but to do so intentionally. And from that moment on, I've written down every intention that's come to me. From that moment on I've written down the names of the people that I've come in contact with and in a specific and intentional way have taken that journal with me to my next holy hour so that I will have someone and something to pray for. So that I can focus that time praying in a very specific way for those who God has called me to love.

And the first names on there are my family, then the priests, then parishioners, and I made sure to have a section in there for those who have harmed me, for those who I blame for my low self-esteem. For those who bullied me as a child, for those who bully me as a priest. Those names are in there, because it's because God loves me that I am called to forgive them. And if I have unforgiveness in my heart, I'm called to at least pray for them by name.

The bishop wrote two letters this last week. One of them is in the bulletin, regarding the testimony of bishop Vigano, and how the diocese and the USCCB is trying to disseminate the information that came out. We also got another letter Friday night where the Bishop is calling priests, deacons, and lay people in a very particular way to pray for the reparation of sin. For the reparation for all of these scandalous things that are going on in our world. And calling the priests to add more time of prayer to add more time in front of the blessed Sacrament. So it was kind of apropos that my penance was to do that just thing. And it got me thinking. What do we offer the laity to have that same opportunity?

This Tuesday, the priests are getting together as the clergy of Oklahoma City to pray a Holy Hour asking God to forgive us for our sins, for our own participation in communal sin and to pray for all of the victims of violence and abuse.

But then starting next Tuesday, when we have Confession, we are going to go back to what we were doing during Lent. We're going to have the opportunity to have adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament on Tuesdays from 5:30 to 6:30. And we'll have the time for Penance during that time as well. If you can't make it on Tuesdays, Wednesdays we're going to do the same thing at Corpus Christi from 5-6. And I'm also implementing the same thing at McGuinness. So that everyone who I'm the shepherd of has that same opportunity to repent, to pray and to have conversion of our own hearts.

Because it starts with us. One person can make a difference. Jesus showed us that. One person can make a difference, each and every individual saint has shown us that. What difference can you make?