

HOMILY ~ July 16-17, 2022

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There is a book, *The Top 5 Regrets of the Dying*, by Bronne Ware. She worked in palliative care for many years, and the book is based upon her work with the dying. The five most common regrets she discovered were:

- **I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.**
- **I wish I hadn't worked so hard.**
- **I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.**
- **I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.**
- **I wish I had let myself be happier.**

We do not want to end our lives with any of these regrets. Jesus will help us to live each day without regret.

In the Gospel Reading, we hear about Martha and Mary. Martha is pointing out to Jesus that Mary is violating the cultural norms of the time. When there was a male guest, the women had to stay in the inner tent and prepare the food for the guest; and they were not to enter the outer tent where the male guest was received. Mary was seated at the feet of Jesus in the outer tent, and this violated social norms. Jesus tells Martha that Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her. Jesus is not confined by cultural norms if they do not make sense in the situation. To put the reading into context, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where he knows he is going to be arrested, tortured and crucified. This will be the last time he will see his dear friends, Martha and Mary, before he dies. Do you think he stopped there for a fabulous meal, or do you think he stopped there because he had some last words to share with them? Do you think that Mary chose the better part? I do. This reading demonstrates the difference between the active life as demonstrated by Martha and the contemplative life as demonstrated by Mary. We need both. The choice is dependent upon the situation.

So let's go back and look at some of those regrets. ***"I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me."*** Jesus wants us to use our gifts, talents and charisms to help others. Jesus has a plan for each of us. Sometimes we are so distracted by activity that we do not really discern what God is calling us to do. Sometimes we are too concerned with what others think, wanting to please others or doing what others expect that we lose track of God's plan. Sometimes we focus on what our culture expects; and frequently, this is not a good moral compass. Maybe we need to be more like Mary and listen to Jesus.

“I wish I hadn’t worked so hard.” Sometimes we get so involved in accumulating money and things for our family, that we forget what is really important. Don’t get me wrong. It is important to provide for our families, but we cannot get carried away. Sometimes we need to forgo the promotion or the overtime and spend more time with family and friends. I have talked to young parents who tell me that sometimes they feel that all they do all day is provide chauffeur service for their children. They feel that if their children are not involved in absolutely everything, they are bad parents. Our culture may be telling us this. Maybe you and your children are working too hard. Parents have told me that as their children got older, they realized that their children do not need or want all of these activities; and they have really scaled back, and their family is happier because of it. Maybe we need to be more like Mary and listen to Jesus.

“I wish I’d had the courage to express my feelings.” We have to take time to develop intimate relationships with family and friends, and that involves sharing our feelings. If we do not take this time to work on our relationships, they become shallow, superficial and fall apart. Maybe we need to be more like Mary and spend time listening to one another.

“I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.” This is something I work on all of the time. I have lifelong friends that are very important to me. The downside of my job is that I am working on weekends and holidays when my friends are socializing. Have you stopped making time for your friends? Maybe you need to pray about that. Your spouse cannot be everything for you; and one day your children are going to grow up and live independent lives, as you raised them to do. We need all of those relationships, and my lifelong friends are priceless.

“I wish I had let myself be happier.” How do you do that? I think by doing all of the above. We need to stay connected with Jesus in contemplative prayer. This is time that we stop reciting and reading prayers and just sit in God’s presence. You may not realize it, but you have this self talk going on in your head all of the time. You need to stop that self talk while in prayer so that Jesus’ messages can come through. We need to be active, but we also need contemplative prayer. Jesus will help us to live a life without regrets if we listen to him.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim