

HOMILY ~ SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FEBRUARY 11/12, 2023

I came across a quote this week that has stuck with me all week, so I want to share it with you. It is from John Wesley, who is an Anglican minister who served in England in the 18th Century. It is from one of his sermons. *“Christianity is essentially a social religion. To turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it.”* I think this is true. I hear people say, *“I do not have to go to church to pray. I can pray anywhere.”* I think that is true, but I think part of being Christian is to join in communal celebrations regularly, and for Catholics, that would be the Mass. Christianity is about prayer and faith, but it is also about loving and serving others. Christianity is not a private devotion.

The Readings today are about keeping the Commandments. In the Gospel, we hear about the Commandment *“You shall not kill, and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.”* Jesus goes on to expand upon this commandment to make it clear that Christianity is a social religion. He also says, *“Whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.”* How many of us have been carrying around anger for a long time? Now, nothing is good or evil about anger. It is a feeling. It is a reaction to what is going on in our environment. But depending upon what we do with the anger, we can get into the sinful part. First of all, we need to acknowledge the anger and own it; and give yourself a time out and sit with it. Ask yourself a few questions. Am I really angry with this person or am I just angry or frustrated with the situation and that person just happen to be there? Am I really angry with that person, or am I really reacting to my own insecurities or fears? Many times when we are angry or frustrated it has more to do with what is going on with me than what the other person said or did. The next question, what is a better way to resolve the anger or frustration rather than trying to get even or get revenge.

A simple example, I am driving behind someone in the fast lane on the freeway; and they are going the speed limit. How dare they do that. Are you really mad at that individual? You do not even know that individual. Are you really mad at someone for obeying the traffic law? Is it really more about you? Are you just impatient and in a hurry for no reason? Are you late for work because you pushed the snooze too many times or are you are afraid you will be late for an appointment? What is a good way to handle this? Turn on your turn indicator and go around them. Do not blast your horn; do not give them the finger. Jesus also says, *“Whoever says, you fool, will be liable to fiery Gehenna.”* Name calling is never a good idea. I think most of us learned that in Kindergarten, but somehow name calling has become more acceptable in recent years. We need to make greater attempts to be civil to one another.

Jesus also says, *“If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* Jesus is saying you cannot worship, you cannot pray to the Lord until you attempt to be reconciled. He is saying that we cannot separate our relationships with others from our relationship with God. One affects the other. If someone has something against you, the first step can be a good apology. That would be I was wrong, I am sorry, please forgive me, is there anything I can do to make things right, and I will not do it again. Giving excuses for what you did cannot be

part of the apology, you know what I mean? *"I am sorry but I was justified in what I did because..."* As soon as you get to the but part, you have to stop. You may discuss these things later, but they are not a part of the apology. Reconciliation takes two people. Both people need to want the reconciliation for it to happen, but it is up to each one to attempt the reconciliation.

Jesus also says, *"Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court."* You need to settle things as quickly as possible. The 24 hour cooling off period is good, but do not let things go on for too long. If you let things go unresolved for too long, it takes on a life of its own; and things become more difficult to resolve. When I talk to someone about a conflict they have had with another person for a long time, I ask them what started this whole conflict. What they tell me is something that is usually not such a big deal, but all of the hurtful things that have gone on for months or years since makes reconciliation difficult. Settle with your opponent quickly.

"Christianity is essentially a social religion. To turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it." We need to gather together to worship regularly. We need to get along with one another. We need each other. Our relationships are the most important things we have. I do not want to give up any of them.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim