

HOMILY ~ 14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME JULY 6/7, 2024

I celebrated my 70th birthday last Sunday. I think I am at a very good place at 70. I have no medical problems; I can still do everything I want to do; and I have my ministry at St. Edith that I love. I have close friends and family. What else could I ask for? But I am aware of getting older, and other people are noticing it as well. About a year ago, I went to Walgreen's for a COVID booster. I had an appointment; but there were a number of people ahead of me, so I had to wait. I watched the young man at the counter as he helped each person. They were all seniors. He was treating people in a very condescending way that was kind of saying, *"You are all old and feeble and can hardly take care of yourself."* When I got to the counter, he asked for my insurance card. I opened my wallet, pulled out several cards and looked through them when he saw my Medicare card. He said, *"That is it. Give me your Medicare card."* I started to say, *"That card will not work"* when he cut me off and in a very condescending way said, *"Just give me that card. It will all be okay."* So, I handed him the card. A couple of minutes later he said, *"This card is not going through. I do not understand."* I said, *"That is what I was trying to tell you. You need my Blue Cross Card."* Now, I am not judging him; but my guess is that he just showed me one of his implicit biases. I looked like a senior citizen so I was also incompetent, barely able to take care of myself and certainly not able to teach him anything. I wondered how many times he closed himself off from learning from someone because they were old.

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue; and people were amazed until they found out who he was. *"We know you. You are just a carpenter, the son of Mary. What can we learn from you?"* Because of the fact that they were not open to him, he could not perform any mighty deeds there. Talk about a missed opportunity!

We all have our struggles. In the Second Reading, Paul talks about a thorn in the flesh given to him by an angel of Satan. Scripture scholars speculate that it may have been a physical illness like epilepsy or maybe a moral failing. The truth is we do not know what it was, but he struggled with it all

his life. I have talked to people who tell me that they keep repeating the same things over and over again when they know it is not good for them. That is your thorn. Paul tells us that God's grace is sufficient. We cannot work through these struggles, these thorns, alone. We need God in our lives. We also need the people that God brings into our lives. I wonder how many times we overlook someone that God has sent us to help us because they are too old, too young, have different religious beliefs, too conservative, too liberal, or are of a different race or nationality. I wonder how many times we refuse the help of others because of preconceived notions about them.

We cannot get anything much accomplished on our own. We need God in our lives, and we need other people. We need close relationships. These can be with family or close friends, the family we have chosen. The time to develop a relationship with God is now. I think it is hard to develop a real prayer life when you are in crisis. We need to nurture close relationships with others now. You need more than one or two close relationships. One person cannot meet all of your needs, and you cannot meet all of theirs. When you are in crisis, you are going to have a hard time developing close relationships. Make sure you have regular contact with friends. Make sure you overlook things that do not matter. Is it going to matter in a month? If the answer is no, let it go. Discuss the things that matter. Forgive. How many relationships have ended because we just cannot forgive? Sometimes we just drift apart; and soon, we are no longer close. Do not let that happen. Paul also says, "*When I am weak, then I am strong.*" Do you want to get closer to God? Work through something with his guidance. You will know his wisdom and power. Do you want to be close with another person? Work through a difficult time with them. Out of your weakness, you can develop a bond that is really strong. We need to be vulnerable in our relationships to grow close. Be open to the people in your life and work on those relationships. We hope to provide an opportunity to connect with others here at St. Edith. It is a safe place to do that. We need God and other people in our lives. Do not miss opportunities.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim