

HOMILY ~ 22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME AUGUST 31 / SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

**Tradition, Tradition, Tradition
Tradition, Tradition, Tradition
You may ask why we practice these Traditions,
well I'll tell you ... I don't know.
But they are Traditions!**

This is the opening song from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Tevye, the main character, is struggling with the Jewish traditions. The Jewish people have been observing these traditions for many years; and he starts questioning their meaning, whether they should continue observing these traditions and whether they should modify them. In our culture today, we tend to like the new and improved; but we still have traditions. When we evaluate our traditions today, we have to remember that the value of the tradition is not necessarily the acts themselves, but instead what they point to. If we take a legalistic approach, we may lose the meaning,

In the Gospel Reading today, the Scribes and the Pharisees are questioning Jesus as to why his Disciples are not following the tradition of the elders and performing the purification ritual before eating. Jesus points out that they are taking a legalistic approach to human traditions and are not allowing them to change their hearts so they can follow God's commandment. They are particularly talking about the hand washing ritual. Today we teach our children to wash their hands before eating, but how many of adults always wash their hands before eating? It depends upon what we were doing before we started eating; and as adults, we can make that judgment.

In the Catholic Church, we have long, standing traditions that we attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. Sunday is the Lord's Day, and part of that is attending Mass. At times, we have taken an overly legalistic approach to this tradition. I have heard people say that as long as you get here before the Gospel and stay until Communion, it counts. If we focus upon how late we can be and how early we can leave, we are missing the point. The point is we come together at least once per week to worship the Lord as a community and receive the Eucharist. That tradition has changed over time because of our culture. Because people have to work on Sundays, we offer Masses after 4:00 pm on Saturdays. That change was very difficult for people to accept after

Vatican II. With COVID, we began streaming the Mass on weekends. There are people who have concluded that watching Mass on the computer is the same as attending Mass. If you think it is the same, you are missing the point of coming to Mass. Streaming is for the people who cannot attend Mass. Coffee and donuts has been a related tradition for as long as I can remember. It is not about getting to eat your favorite donut. It is about coming together and building community. That is the point of our Saturday Night Snacks, our Pizza and Spaghetti Dinner Nights and our Fish Fry's. The food is part of the tradition, but it is pointing to building community.

There are traditions that have nothing to do with Church, like families sitting down to dinner together each night and the big family dinners we used to have on Sundays. The point was not the food, it was families gathering and sharing where they were at in their lives, staying connected and supporting one another. We may not be able to hold on to that tradition in the same way, but I hear many people wanting to bring back the Sunday family dinners. When I see families out to dinner together and everyone is on their phone, I think they are missing the point. Maybe we can get rid of the phones at least during dinner.

Something that developed out of necessity maybe we should make a tradition. We used to leave our homes and go to work. That all changed with COVID. With everyone working from home, people in management have told me how difficult it is to create a team when people are never together. Some people are connected with work all of the time, and some are not doing much work. There is little commitment to the company when you are in your basement working for a company out of state where you do not know anyone. What about all the information and ideas that are exchanged by the coffee maker, in the lunchroom, or when you casually meet at someone's desk. You will never have any work friends. Maybe we do not think these things are important, or maybe there are other ways we can accomplish these things. I am just asking.

Maybe the new and improved is better. Maybe we should be very careful before we throw out our traditions. They may point to something very important.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim