

HOMILY ~ 26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME SEPTEMBER 28/29, 2024

There was a young girl and she was just misbehaving badly, and her mother was losing patience so she made her go to her room. A little while later, she came out of her room all smiles. She said, *“I prayed to God while I was in my room.”* Her mother said, *“Did you pray that God would help you behave?”* The little girl responded, *“No I prayed that God would help you put up with my behavior.”* That is funny, but we do that sometimes. We can identify the things that are not working for us, but we do not always pick the right solution for the problem.

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus tells us if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Now I do not think Jesus is telling us to start dismembering our bodies. I think he is telling us that if something is causing us to sin, we have to identify the cause and change. Like the little girl, sometimes we want to go on doing what we are doing and blame someone else. *They* have to change. The problem with this is that we cannot control the behavior of others. We can only control our own behavior and how we react to the behavior of others. It is difficult to change, particularly if it is a habit that we have had for a long time. But we need to change.

I am going to suggest that you spend some time this week praying about what is not working in your life and see what you need to change. When I hear people say I do not have time to do something, frequently I think this is an excuse. What you are really saying is that something else is more important. When I read studies that show people are spending six hours a day on their phone, I have to wonder what they could possibly be doing on their phone that is worth six hours per day. What you are really saying is being on my phone is more important than spending time with my children or with my spouse. Or, spending time on my phone is more important than coming to Mass on the weekend or personal prayer. I want to do things for others, but I do not have the time. I think it a worthwhile exercise to

periodically keep track of what you are spending your time doing for a week, and see if you are doing the things that you think are most important. We have an epidemic of loneliness in our country today. Is that because we are allowing friends on Facebook to replace real friends? Do we post things on social media that we would never say to someone's face? It may be easier to post, but it is just as damaging to our relationships. Have we just gotten so comfortable staying at home with technology that we have given up all of those rich times with friends and relatives? If technology is causing problems in your life, turn it off. I do not expect you to go cold turkey, but at least put some boundaries on it.

Jesus also says, "*Whoever is not against us is for us.*" I look out at the congregation today and there are people with a wide variety of opinions and political affiliations, but do you think people are really against you? You are coming up to receive the Eucharist together. You are serving at the soup kitchen together. You are attending *Grief Share* or *Divorce Care* or a Bible study together. I am not sure I can think of anyone here that is really against me. We may have our differences, but I do not think they are against me. I wonder how many relationships with family and friends that could have been very rich we have cut off because we have perceived them as against us, as the evil other. Maybe this is another reason why we are so lonely.

Your homework this week is to keep track of what you are doing and how much time you spend doing it. Are you giving your time to the things that are important? Maybe if you grab your phone first thing in the morning to see what you missed overnight, you could spend that same time in personal prayer. I guarantee you that is a better way to start your day. If technology is causing problems in your life, turn it off or put some boundaries on it. If you are not doing it already, start spending time with people physically and do not be so quick to cut people off as being against you. You may be cutting off the very people that God has put in your life to help or to help you.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim