



Homily for
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
27/28 February, 2016

Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....

"But I tell you if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"

I. When I meet with families to prepare the funeral liturgy for their loved one, I get the impression often times they tend to shy away from readings which suggest some sort of judgment.

For example, a selection from Paul's letter to the Romans ends this way, "So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God."

Or, from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil."

And even the awesome Last Judgment scene from Matthew where the Son of Man separates the sheep from the goats with the sheep destined for the Father's kingdom on the right and the goats destined for the eternal fire on his left is a gospel seldom chosen.

Perhaps it's just my imagination, but I think I detect a hesitation about any

reading that might suggest a judgment. I don't know if they are thinking about their loved one or maybe about themselves and the message of the reading hits a little too close to home for comfort.

II. But the concept of there being a final judgment – of there coming a time when we will need to give an account of how well we have lived a life of love – is clearly in our theology, and clearly stated in scripture. It is inescapable. We can't just pretend it isn't there or that it won't happen or that it doesn't apply to us!

The Last Judgment scene in the gospel of Matthew paints a dramatic picture of God separating out the sheep from the goats, the good from the bad. And in the gospel we just heard from Luke, Jesus is making that point clear. Yes, God is merciful, and yes, God gives us multiple second chances, but it isn't endless. *Like the fig tree given a second chance there will come a point when we will need to show that we are producing fruit.*

This point of there coming a time when we need to be accountable for our sins should not instill fear in our hearts; it should not be a day of dread. Rather, think of it as a *motivation* to repent.

The image of Moses standing – figuratively speaking – naked before God in the burning bush, should inspire us to stand humbly before God, before God who doesn't want to frighten us, but before God who loves us so much that he wants us to spend eternity with him.

The opportunity to repent is a gift. Instead of rejecting us, God gives us the

opportunity to look at ourselves honestly and humbly – to face the truth about ourselves before ourselves. Repentance is the door that opens us to God’s mercy.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul invites his listeners to learn from the mistakes of the past. Their Jewish ancestors had not always done so well in following God’s commandments. There are lessons to be learned from their transgressions. Each of us has messed up in the past; we carry memories of those sins with us. But are they a burden or have they taught a lesson? How do our mistakes and sins inform our present behavior and guide us to do better as we continue our faith journey?

III. (Tomorrow/this) afternoon we will be having a communal service of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at Holy Trinity. Somewhere along the line...I think it was in my Lenten reading...the point was made that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is *God’s gift to us*. This sacrament is not intended to be avoided, or feared and diminished as unimportant. It is a gift whereby our guilt, our burdens, our sins are removed. We are given freedom, peace of mind, confidence in God’s love and joy in living each day.

IV. The Sacrament of Reconciliation calls us to accountability – an accountability which facilitates our spiritual growth in our faith journey. It is a sacrament of maturity and responsibility. There, we encounter Jesus who is the Redeemer and we, the redeemed. We are graced and Jesus is the source of all grace.

Fr. Kyle's homily follows....

Today the readings give us a strong message calling us to repentance. Jesus is very clear in his message when he says things like, "if you do not repent, you will all perish". So how do we do at repenting for our sins? How often do we think about our sins? Have we gotten lazy or given up trying to chip away harmful sins from our life.

A few years ago, I remember walking through an art museum. There was one section totally devoted to marble sculptures. I went through room after room of beautifully smooth and sculpted masterpiece statues. I marveled at how much work and effort the great artists used to chip away the rough edges and make the marble smooth and beautiful. I got to one statue that was not so beautiful. Actually, it was quite ugly. It was supposed to be a man standing next to his dog. However, the man's legs were actually just a rough and jagged chunk of marble. The dog had not even been started, and the upper body and face was not smooth at all. I asked one of the museum workers what the deal was and he said the artist gave up on this piece of marble and just left it with all its imperfections.

God is calling us to be a beautiful masterpiece but He can't do this unless we let him chip away some of our jagged edges; our sins. So what do we do when we notice these imperfections in our life? Do we take them to God, the Master sculptor to chip off and smooth out, or are we like that sculptor who just gave up and left all of the jagged imperfections?

I also remember hearing that the great artist Michelangelo had a unique way of beginning a sculpture. He would look at a jagged chunk of marble and see a beautiful masterpiece hidden in that marble that he wanted to set free from the edges and imperfections. This is what God wants to do with us. But He cannot set us free from the jagged edges unless we let him.

In the sacrament of Reconciliation we place ourselves in the hands of God, the master sculptor. We say to Him, "Hey, check out all my jagged edges, look at my imperfection. Smooth those out for me". And God does. He sets us free from our sins to be the great saints that he calls us to be. Today at 3PM we have a chance to do this. God looks at us in our roughness and

imperfections and sees the masterpiece that is hidden within. When we go to reconciliation, God can begin to set us free from that roughness and imperfection to be a beautiful masterpiece.