



Homily for
THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
02/03 July, 2016

Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....

*"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*

I. "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the
Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and
justice for all."

When we pledge allegiance to the flag and to our nation – we are pledging
allegiance to the founding principles of our nation. We pledge allegiance
because we hold dear all of the rights, privileges and freedoms which are the
result of those founding principles. We have a long history of doing everything
we can to protect those rights, privileges and freedoms. And we are watchful
that no one undermines those principles or any of those freedoms.

It is no secret that our nation faces many challenges – and we often
vehemently disagree with one another about how to protect those freedoms or

whether or not some force wants to undermine or take them away. And the political rhetoric we hear this election year highlights even more sharp divisions among us.

II. St. Paul's "pledge of allegiance" points the way out of this quagmire, and, especially for Christians, emboldens us to be courageous leaders, helping our fellow citizens to move beyond the sharp divisions among us and find ways to enhance and build upon the ideals and founding principles of our Republic.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

This is the Christian's pledge of allegiance – our allegiance is the cross and the power this cross gives to us.

But the message of the cross often times stands in sharp contrast to many forces swirling around us.

Clearly, the message of the cross stands in contrast:

- to the evil of terrorism with its complete disregard for human life,
- the cross stands in contrast to violence which is another kind of evil terrorizing civilians, randomly killing and maiming anyone who gets in the way
- the message of the cross is a respect life message which adamantly stands for the protection of all life, from conception until natural death, from those who are strong and healthy to those who are weak and vulnerable, from those who enjoy the material goods of life to those who are poor and struggle for necessities. All are to be respected as persons, created in the image and likeness of God

- through the cross we learn and understand that all is gift – who we are, what we have, the blessings that come our way – all is God’s gift intended for our use, but also shared with others
- the cross invites us to the fullness of human living, to moral integrity which teaches us how to overcome sin and temptation and grow in holiness
- the cross invites us to experience – like those 72 disciples sent out by Jesus – that we can move beyond reliance upon our own resources and place our trust in God’s providential care over us.

Essentially, the message of the cross is the message of love.

III. In so many ways, the cross of Jesus Christ creates all things new. It reorders our priorities. It helps to define who we are as disciples of Jesus. It places us in opposition to the standards of the world. We learn to judge success or failure in a different way.

The cross of Jesus Christ is a brilliant beacon of light shining out of the darkness wrought by terrorism, greed, violence and complete selfishness.

IV. But those who pledge allegiance to the cross will not have an easy time of it.

Often times, they will be questioned, challenged, dismissed outright – judged as fools. Some will be subjected to great suffering – as we see happening to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East: victims of genocide.

But those who pledge allegiance to the cross proclaim true fulfillment, true joy is found only in God. Only in God do we discover the true meaning of love,

the consolation of genuine peace and the hope of divine mercy.

V. Those of us who pledge allegiance to the cross are empowered to ease the suffering around us – found in friends and family, neighbors and strangers – who struggle with the challenges of daily living. To them we are Christ’s comforting word and healing hands. In many ways we can cast out the demons of despair, addiction, poverty, hatred and violence. The cross gives us the courage to move out of our comfort zones and try to be ambassadors of Christ to the world.

The first reading from the prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse of what can happen when we are agents of Christ bringing his life saving message to others.

We can help others to feel the mothering comfort of God’s love; we can help nurture them into becoming God’s good children.

May we never boast of anything except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fr. Kyle’s homily follows...

One of my aunts on my mother’s side is a Lutheran minister. You might be able to imagine how interesting family get-togethers are with a Catholic priests and a Lutheran minister sitting next to each other. One question that has been brought up on a few occasions is why we Catholics have a crucifix in all of our churches. She says it is such an ugly and painful image. I explain it is not an image of ugliness or pain but an image of how much he loves us. And so we don’t shy away from this image but we boast in the great love shown on the cross. St. Paul speaks of boasting in the cross and so perhaps we can think about our own cross. What does it look like? How do we react to that cross?

There is a story about a young man who was struggling with his cross. This young man was at the end of his rope one day. He felt as though he had tried everything he knew to remedy his situation. Seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer. "Lord, I can't go on," he said. "I have too heavy of a cross to bear." The Lord replied, "My son, if you can't bear its weight, just place your cross inside this room. Then, open that other door and pick out any cross you wish." The man was filled with relief. "Thank you, Lord," he sighed as he did as he was told. Upon entering the other door, he saw many crosses, some so large that the tops were not visible. Then he spotted a small cross leaning against a far wall. "I'd like that one, Lord," he whispered. And the Lord replied, "My son, that is the cross you just brought in."

As we look at our life, what does our cross look like? How do we react to that cross? Do we run from it trying to find a different one; one that is not so big? Or do we embrace our cross out of love?

There is a story about St. Catherine who was praying in front of a crucifix. She was praising all of the different things used in the Jesus crucifixion. She would say, "blessed are you crown of thorns. Blessed are you wood of the cross. Blessed are you nails that held my Lord to the cross". As she said this Jesus responded to her saying, "the nails could not have held me. It was my love for you that held me to the cross."

Jesus had the freedom and power to come down from the cross. Yet he chose to embrace that cross and suffer out of love for us. We too have the freedom to run from our cross or to embrace it out of love. This weekend we celebrate the 4th of July and our freedom. May we use this freedom for greatness. May we freely choose to embrace our cross out of love for others.