

Homily (3rd Sunday of Lent) – 3/4/2018

Here is a question. A question no doubt keeps you up late at night seeking the answer. “Are there more McDonald’s restaurants in the world or more Subway restaurants in the world? Well right now, there are more Subway restaurants than McDonald’s in the world.

I know it is surprising. You might doubt as I did but look it up, google it. Okay here is another question. Are there more Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in the United States or in China? The answer is there are more Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurants in China than in the USA. Surprising isn’t it. Nothing can surprise like a new idea especially a new idea that is true. We might deny, defend against it. Still the idea remains true.

Now, you might say what does this all have to do with today’s gospel. With Jesus getting angry at the money changers in the Temple. Well let’s look at our ideas about Jesus. See what they are and if you and I resist new ideas. For example, you know there are no physical descriptions of Jesus anywhere in the gospels. The gospel writers did not think that was important. All the pictures of Jesus we see are just guesses from the mind of the artist who painted them. Some pictures of Jesus having him looking like a very handsome man with a chiseled chin and a trimmed beard and a big smile on his face. Why he could be on the cover of a fashion magazine.

Yet, that is all fantasy. There is no evidence for it. Those pictures might express more about the painter than Jesus. The truth is we do not know how tall Jesus was. Suppose he was smaller than we imagine. Suppose he was a little overweight. Suppose he was bald. We do not know.

You and I live in a very visual culture. Perception is reality. Image is everything. Clothes make the man or woman we say. So, we imagine Jesus as a youthful man with a great body, good teeth, and an attractive face. You know scholars will tell you that Jesus was probably older than many, maybe most of the people he preached to, in those days thirty years of age was the new sixty years of age. Why?

Health care many infants and babies about never reached six years of age. Maybe one fourth never made it to their 16th birthday, fewer than that made it into their late twenties. These might strike you as new ideas and you might deny and defend against.

So, we do not have any reliable data on what Jesus of Nazareth looked like. Our personal picture of him probably reveals more about us than about him. Look at the devotional pictures that people might have of Jesus, all well and good, but many of these pictures are so unlike themselves. God became human. Look you are an imperfect, flawed human being. So am I. Yet it is our flawed, imperfect, humanity that is the nearest thing to God on earth. That is why God became human in Jesus. Now Christ in the Eucharist is God present but in a sacramental way.

Think about it this way, as you go through mood to mood today in your head, as you experience one feeling after the other breaking inside your forehead like ocean waves at the beach. This flawed imperfect humanity, your flawed imperfect humanity, is the nearest thing to God on earth. Why?

Because Jesus took it on. He entered into it and became completely human. That is what we mean by Christmas. Yet if we picture him as being as unlike us as possible, we create a distance. Which gets us back to Jesus being ticked off in the Temple. Have you ever been ticked off angry? Well here is Jesus being ticked off, angry.

All this is to present you with the idea, Jesus might be more like you than you first imagine: Gospels tell us Jesus left Nazareth and had a house in Capernaum. Now maybe he too consulted Angie's list when he needed a plumber. How about his relationship with his family. You know Jesus relationship with his family seemed to be off again and on again. His mother and him were not always on the same page. He embarrassed the family. At times they worried about the soundness of his mind. It is all in the gospels. And although he had loyal followers, he often went off on his own into the wilderness or mountains. Do you ever feel the need to get away and be by yourself? So did he.

Jesus gets hungry. He eats, sleeps, thirsts. He is so busy many times he misses meals. That ever happen to you? He loved, grieved, knew compassion. Jesus was

on speaking terms with failure and frustration. And you know trust in the heavenly Father did not come automatic with Jesus. In fact, as his life and ministry went on there were more reasons not to trust than to trust the Heavenly Father. Ever feel that way?

In the garden of Gethsemane the night before he died, he was stressed out, weighed down and sad about life - ever happen to you? What is my point?

Many of the physical and emotional qualities we humans are so ashamed of are not blocks to God. They were also found in Jesus. So today Jesus loses it in the temple, turns over tables. Some are not comfortable with such an image or idea of Jesus. They resist the idea he could be as human as they are rather they put him on a pedestal too quickly and they never let him be part of their lives. The next time you pass a McDonalds or Subway , or Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, won't you think about these things?