

Homily (6th Sunday of Ordinary Time) – 2/11/2018

Last Sunday after the 12:30 pm Spanish Mass at St. James something happened. Something I have never seen happen in a Catholic Church. All the women and children left the church, but the men stayed seated. Now this was pre-arranged. One of the members of the Spanish Community asked me beforehand if he could speak to the men after mass. Still it was impressive to watch.

The community of women and children filing out of the church. Just the men remained. They gathered in the pews up front. What was even more impressive was the topic of the address to the men. The topic was pornography on the internet and how some men in the community are addicted to it. The man spoke to his audience about his own trials coming to terms with chastity in sex. And he held up a book on coming to terms with sexuality that he said turned his life around. It was a book he said that performed a miracle in his life. He believed this book could help many other men act mature and respectfully with women. The 50 or 60 men listened attentively. Afterwards, a number of them ordered the book from the bookstore. As men in a marriage they wanted to see sex as good and beautiful. The book would be a means to an end to purify themselves of childish disorders about sex. The book was not an end in itself but a means to an end that was most important.

Now that is the way Jesus did miracles. You see when Jesus performed miracles it was as a means for an end, an end more important than even the miracle healing itself. That is why he often instructs his followers not to tell anyone about the wonders of his works. They would see the miracles in terms of only this world. You see when Jesus performed miracles of healing as in today's gospel, the healing of the leper, the healing did not stop there. The leper's whole relationship with God was about being made clean. Not just physically made clean from a skin disease that eats away at the flesh but also made clean too of any emotional, moral disorder or addiction eating away at the soul. Haven't you heard someone who suffers from an addiction say, "I have been clean now for a year."

Our relationship with God is somehow all about God cleaning us up, purifying us. Yet why does Jesus want to miraculously heal and clean up people in the first place? Is he just a nice guy?

Well to answer that let's look at how Jesus sees you. In fact, let's look at how the greatest philosophers in history such as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle also see you. How some of the greatest minds in the Catholic Church such as Thomas Aquinas see you. All of them name four signs inside you, they call transcendents. They are tattooed onto your heart. These four transcendents inside you seek something only a god could give.

You know even the pagan philosophers such as Socrates and Plato and Aristotle cite these four signs as proofs for the immortality of the human soul. So, allow me for a minute to introduce your human soul, to yourself. Did you know that in the very DNA of your human soul there is profound desire for absolute and perfect truth. And nothing can take that desire away. Did you know that in the very DNA of your human soul there is also a profound desire for perfect and absolute beauty. And nothing can take that desire away. Did you know that in the very DNA of your human soul there is a profound desire for absolute and perfect unconditional love. And no human being can give that quality of love to you. By the way that is what ruins so many human relationships. We demand the other be absolute and perfect unconditional human love.

We can be like the couple preparing for marriage who go to the priest and she says to the priest, my fiancé is all I will ever want. And the fiancé says she is all I will ever need. And the priest says, "Well, this relationship will work if one of you or both of you dies on the honey moon." No human being can give you what you are ultimately looking for in God. Your heart runs too deep. Trying to completely fill up your soul with human love is like trying to fill up the Grand Canyon with pebbles.

Now, along with the desire for perfect truth, beauty and love is the desire for perfect fairness and justice. This is why God created republicans. Or, if you are a democrat, that is why God created democrats. It is the reason why there are Fox News and MSNBC political talk shows. Each says we fulfill your desire for perfect fairness and justice. So, think about it perfect truth and beauty, perfect love and fairness are what we mean by God. And in our fallen human nature, the result of original sin, we will look for such divine godlike perfection in all the wrong places. Which is why Jesus ultimately wants to heal us. Sure the lame and blind and deaf ought to be healed. Of course those suffering fevers and demonic possessions need to be healed.

But the ultimate healing from Jesus is helping us to realize our divine nature. Realizing our divine nature is what Jesus mission is ultimately about. And his mission continues in his church.

There has got to be some part of your life that is not working for you. That is why at 7:00 pm on Thursday evening February 22nd we will celebrate a healing mass. Won't you please consider coming?