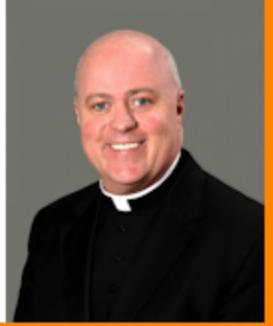


Father Chapin's Homily



SEPTEMBER 23, 2018 – Humility

So, the other day I was talking to this guy.

And he was upset.

He was full of ANGER,

A lot of FEAR,

And HUMILIATION.

Let's just say this guy was having a bad day.

I'm sure most of us have been there at some point in our lives.

In the case of this man, a series of circumstances had presented themselves to him of which he really had NO control.

And because of that he just could NOT see a way forward.

He was gripped by fear.

And I got to say I just wasn't exactly sure what to say to him.

I searched for words of comfort, but all that came were tired platitudes.

And you know that is OK because SOMETIMES the best is to say nothing for awhile.

But there was a third person involved in the conversation and they said, THIS TOO SHALL PASS.

Which I thought, “OK, Well that’s pretty good but it really does not address the issue at hand now does it?”

But then again it IS true. Circumstances of today DO change into circumstances of tomorrow.

That is just a fact.

And “THIS TOO SHALL PASS” does offer HOPE>

Which is a CARDINAL VIRTUE by the way.

And of course, the world could use more HOPE.

If you have a hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel, the darkness gets easier.

The GRIEF of today, and the FEARS of today will pass.

But back to our conversation.

This THIRD person talking continued with, “I suggest you pray for God’s will in this matter and I will be praying for the same.”

So, THIS TOO SHALL PASS.

PRAY FOR GOD’S WILL> And BOTH of these are good.

But BEFORE any of that can happen.

There is an ESSENTIAL ingredient that must get backed into the cake and it is a RARE concept.

In fact, IF there was an ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST for words, this one would surely be on it.

And the word is HUMILITY.

Because, if you are seeking GOD'S will in your life ... and ONLY that,

And I am NOT talking about seeking with, HERE ARE SOME OF MY SUGGESTIONS.

NO, IF you are TRULY seeking God's will, you got to give up the car keys.

NO MORE PLAN B.

Stop trusting your own thinking ... It is out of your hands as you cry out to God in ANGER, FEAR, and DESPAIR.

That is what today's Gospel is all about.

HUMILITY.

That endangered word.

Because so many of us walk around thinking we are BIG STUFF.

Which is really kind of comical when considering the overwhelming immensity of God's creation.

Take for example, the night sky.

As a boy, I always looked for the Big Dipper.

Which I later found out was in the Great Square of Pegasus.

Now, it turns out that the lower left-hand corner start of the Great Square of Pegasus, or the Big Dipper, is not really a star at all.

No, it turns out this little pin prick of light that fits under my thumb is a GALAXY as large as our Milky Way.

And it is merely ONE of a BILLION galaxies.

And not only that, but this PARTICULAR galaxy that fits under my thumb as the lower left corner of the Big Dipper, is home to ONE HUNDRED BILLION SUNS.

All of which are larger than our sun! I mean, you think about THAT.

The Big Dipper is even BIGGER than I thought.

So, when you look at the cosmos in that light ...

Not to mention geological time,

ARE WE SMALL ENOUGH?

Our lives are but a breath.

Bu, here we are running around exalting ourselves.

I mean, THINK ABOUT IT.

WHAT IF there IS something behind this creation?

WHAT IF there was a FORCE behind it.

A force that is intimately aware of what you are going through right now.

Is that possible?

Well, according to Jesus the answer is YES.

It is MORE than possible.

It is an absolute reality.

So ... let's say He is right.

WHAT IF, there is in fact, a God and he knows you and everything that you are going through?

Now, I think for most of us we think we KNOW what we need.

Or at least we know what we WANT from God.

And given the fact we got 7 billion people walking around I imagine the wish list varies a bit.

But BEFORE we start thinking about what it is WE WANT from God, let's turn the tables and ask another question.

Like I said, most of us have a pretty good idea of what we want from God, but what do you think God want from US?

If you read the scriptures, you will find MANY things that God may want from us and from you.

But it ALL gets back to that ENDANGERED SPECIES WORD ... HUMILITY.

Micah Chapter 6, verse 8

He says He has shown you, Oh mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To ACT JUSTLY and TO LOVE MERCY and to WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.

HUMILITY.

Jesus addresses this issue many times.

One time Jesus was invited to a dinner party at a Pharisee's house He noticed the people were jostling for positions of honor at the table.

Jesus looked at them and said,

“When you are invited to a banquet take the LOWEST place.”

And he finished by saying, “Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

We find a parable in Luke that is close to my heart ...

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Two men go up to the temple to pray.

One is a Pharisee and one is a Tax Collector.

The Pharisee stood off by himself.

He prayed, “Oh God I THANK YOU that I am NOT like other people,

Robbers,

Evil-doers,

Adulterers.

Or even like this Tax Collector.

I fast TWICE A WEEK and give a TENTH of all I get.”

Meanwhile the Tax Collector stood at a distance.

He can't even look up.

He beats his breast and cries out, “LORD HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER.”

Which, by the way, is an excellent Act of Contrition in a Sacrament of Confession which I know has fallen out of favor recently, but is still one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church.

So, here you have the EPITOME of righteous bloviating and the lowest of the low COMING CLEAN.

And Jesus says, “I tell you THIS MAN rather than the OTHER went home justified before God.”

And then we see him say it AGAIN.

So, when Jesus says something once we ought to pay attention.

But if he says something TWICE ... well let's take the roast beef out of our ears and hear this.

“For those who exult themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

I told you that this parable is close to my heart.

I wear this collar.

I try to be an example of a good Christian.

So, am I the Pharisee here or am I the Tax Collector?

Let's get back to that endangered species word,

HUMILITY.

The Tax Collector says basically I am worthy of NOTHING.

And I am begging for mercy.

Now on the other side you have this Pharisee.

He is dressed for the part.

He was wearing a uniform,

Just like I am wearing a uniform today.

People can tell he is a Pharisee by looking at him.

And he is following all of the rules.

I guess he figured that because of that, God owed him something.

And when he stared over at that Tax Collector!!

He didn't see humility.

No, what he saw had the OPPOSITE EFFECT.

Rather than seeing humility, it kindled pride within him.

I AM BETTER THAN THAT GUY.

Do you know that when a Pharisee was about ready to tithe a large amount of money at the temple they actually blew a trumpet?

I'm serious.

LOOK AT ME,

Look at how righteous I am.

You know that old saying,

PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL.

In the Book of James, we read that "God opposes the proud, but show favor to the humble."

So, let's back to our Gospel.

OK.

So, I am in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 9, verse 30.

Let's get to this.

What do we need to do?

ANYONE?

CONTEXT.

We got to set the table.

One cannot plumb the deeper meanings of scripture in isolation.

If you were with us last week, Jesus has just told his disciples for the **FIRST TIME** that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the elders and scribes, and be killed and after three days would rise from the dead.

That's **BIG!**

Now as you recall, Peter did not take too kindly to this notion.

And he said in his **PETERESQUE** way, oh no that ain't gonna happen.

Now when he does this.

He is, and I think very much by **ACCIDENT**, channeling that **THIRD TEMPTATION** in the desert.

Remember that one?

And he took him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms and principalities of the world and said **ALL OF THIS** can be yours.

You can be Messiah if you want to be.

You don't have to suffer.

You don't have to die.

I'll give you a shortcut.

All you go to do is bow to me.

You don't think that was in the back of his mind while he was sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane?

And what came out of that?

The greatest prayer of all.

NOT MY WILL LORD, BUT THY WILL BE DONE.

But here out of Peter's mouth comes that temptation.

And for a SECOND time Jesus says GET BEHIND ME SATAN.

So, In our Gospel today, Mark Chapter 9, verse 30,

Jesus predicts for the SECOND TIME the PASSION.

The Son of God will be handed over to men and they will kill him and three days later he will rise from the dead.

Now it says that they did not understand it, but that they were afraid to question him.

Which is a bit odd given the fact that he is Rabbi or teacher.

Why do you suppose they were afraid to ask him any questions?

Well, the last time someone question him was Peter.

Need I say more?

I mean Jesus rebuked him and even called him Satan.

Have you ever had a question that you wanted to ask, but were afraid to ask because you didn't want to look stupid?

Or how about this?

Has someone ever said to you, "You know what I mean? and you said YES even though you really didn't.

If you do, you become the one who isn't quite sure where they are, but refuses to ask for directions.

Which is PRECISELY how so many of us live our lives.

Now this is NOT in scripture, but I can just imagine what must be going on in the disciple's circle these days.

Well, why don't YOU ask him Peter?

I am not asking him anything!

You ask him.

And I must say as far as questions go, it was a VERY good question.

We look at the Crucifixion in hindsight.

We get the REST OF THE STORY.

But do the disciples?

Or, ANY Jew for that matter. The IDEA that a Messiah that is going to be killed is ridiculous.

It made no sense at all.

It is not on the resume.

In fact, if a Messiah DID get killed, he AIN'T MESSIAH.

And yet they had seen Jesus HEAL,

CALM STORMS,

FEED 5000,

And CAST OUT DEMONS.

And recently Peter, who was CLEARLY illuminated by GOD, stated he IS, in fact, Messiah.

But here is the problem.

Messiah doesn't die.

So, this was a GOOD question.

And what is all this RAISING FROM THE DEAD business?

They had seen Jesus raise Jairus's daughter.

But, if HE is dead, who is going to raise him?

So, somewhere in a house in downtown Capernaum, Jesus looks at them and asks, "What were you arguing about along the way?"

But, they remained SILENT.

SO BUSTED!

Because, they had been discussing among themselves on the way WHO is the greatest.

Now HOW they got on this subject is a mystery.

But my money's on Peter.

Maybe they were discussing WHO among themselves would raise Jesus from the dead?

I can just hear Peter, "Well, he called me Rock!" and maybe Thomas replying, "Yeah, but he ALSO called you Satan."

So, they quibbled about what?

PRIDE.

And pride ALWAYS DESTROYS UNITY.

Of course, Jesus KNEW what they were talking about.

So, this is a teachable moment.

Jesus takes this opportunity to reveal to his disciples the SECRET OF LIFE.

"If any one of you wished to be FIRST, he shall be the LAST of all and the SERVANT of all.

And then sitting, he put a child on his lap and said, “Whoever receives a child such as this IN MY NAME receives me,

And whoever receives me, receives the one who sent me.”

Jesus will put a towel around his waist and wash their feet to prove this point to them.

And then later, he will DIE ON A CROSS to prove this point to the world.

Humble yourself in service.

We live in a world that is completely deficient of humility.

We live in a world that places NO value on humility at all.

While examples of FALSE humility about TRUE humility before God is rare.

So, if you DON’T have humility, HOW do you get it?

Well, there seems to be a couple of ways.

ONE is to be taught by example.

As we see OTHERS walk humbly in the Lord SERVING OTHERS and not bringing praise upon themselves, but rather maintaining an ACUTE awareness of their shortcomings.

Much like our Tax Collector.

The OTHER way, and it is by far the most common way, we learn humility is through HUMILIATION.

And HUMILIATION is no fun.

But the GOOD thing that comes out of humiliation, is the possibility of humility.

Because when you suffer ANGER, FEAR, and DESPAIR,
As HUMILIATION hangs all over you, there is an opportunity to stand before a
LOVING GOD and RECOGNIZE that you have NO POWER.

And HE has ALL THE POWER.

As you say THIS TOO SHALL PASS.

And pray that great prayer that comes out of the Garden of Gethsemane.

NOT my will Lord, but THY will be done.

And when you walk humbly before the Lord in SERVICE to others, YOU will be
have the SECRET of LIFE.

Remember when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey?

The people were laying out garments on the street for him to walk on.

Here is my question ...

Do you think that donkey was proud?

Or do you think he KNEW the people were NOT honoring HIM, but rather Jesus
who was sitting on his back.

When you serve others and they want to honor you,

With PRAISE or even a plaque.

Keep in mind, YOU are no more than a DONKEY with Jesus on you back.

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