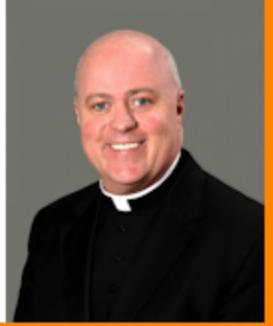


Father Chapin's Homily



SEPTEMBER 9, 2018 – THE REST OF THE STORY

I remember as a kid there was this guy on the radio named Paul Harvey.

Loved that guy.

I am sure many of you out there remember Paul.

He had a tag line, what was it? “And now for the REST OF THE STORY.”

He was great.

Because the REST OF THE STORY always had a twist that would change the story.

And isn't that so true for us as well?

So often we get PART of the story.

Pieces of the story.

Maybe a rumor. Maybe gossip.

And we form opinions don't we?

You know every once in a while someone wants to debate me.

And I am just not interested.

I have LONG ago resigned from the Great Debating Society.

You are never going to argue someone in to the faith.

You are never going to put just the right words together in such a way that somebody is going to have a V-8 moment and say WOW your right.

That is not going to happen.

And that is OK. The good news about the good news is that it ain't my job anyways.

But this collar draws that kind of thing.

People who, for whatever reason, feel compelled to explain to me that my belief of Jesus is folly.

Fallacious in nature.

Mere Foolishness.

A Myth made up by men.

And they throw stones.

And one of the biggest stones is CONTRADICTION.

The bible is full of contradictions.

Really?

Can you give me an example?

NO,

They can't.

Because NOT knowing the story, because of course they have never read it, they CERTAINLY don't know the REST OF THE STORY.

Our Gospel today is a sign post to the REST OF THE STORY.

Jesus is in the temple.

He is preaching a message that had never been heard.

He is talking about the possibility of having an intimate relationship with the God.

And quite UNLIKE anything else they had heard this was open to everyone.

NOBODY was excluded.

Judaism at the time taught that anyone that had a disease, or handicap, or mental illness was ritually unclean and NOT to be touched.

They were considered cursed by God and the affliction as rooted in sin.

They were banned from the synagogue.

Guards were posted at the front gate of the temple to keep the unworthy out.

Now all the sudden you have this man coming out of the backwoods of Nazareth and not only is he TOUCHING the unclean he's HEALING them and bringing them a message in the name of God.

And get this....He actually called Yahweh his FATHER.

Like he is the First Born Son of God or something.

It is disgusting,

It is abhorrent,

It is an INSULT to a name you can't even say.

Normally we could have him put out along with the rest of the low lifes or maybe we could have him ARRESTED for inciting theses crowds.

But we gotta do SOMETHING.

But there is ONE problem.

And it is a BIG problem.

He is doing miracles.

And there is NOTHING quite as stubborn as a good miracle.

And I am not talking snake oil salesman CHARLATAN healer.

I'm talking about healing leprosy and blindness.

We sent on our own Nicademos to talk to him and he came back mumbling some gibberish about being BORN AGAIN.

He even INSULTED him by telling him he had no business being a teacher of Israel!

And he was being NICE.

He was sympathetic.

We worry about him.

And the other day when we caught his disciples NOT washing hands,

Like you're SUPPOSED to do for Yahweh's sake,

He basically said the Traditions of the Elders were USELESS and that we are all a bunch of hypocrites.

Said it to OUR FACE!

The man is OBVIOUSLY possessed.

So THAT is the story of the religious leadership of Israel.

But now let's look at the crowds.

What is THEIR story?

Did you hear about the man out of Nazareth who fed a whole mountain side of people?

With leftovers?

My neighbor's uncle was traveling here for Passover with his family and he said they ate as much fish and bread as they could eat.

I heard from this guy down the street that some woman was healed just by TOUCHING him.

AND he had raised a Rabbi's daughter from the dead.

HE WILL HEAL ANYBODY!

And he doesn't charge any money it is totally free.

THAT is the story that is moving through the crowds.

People pushing.

Many coming to him in great desperation.

Many, just to see the show.

But is THAT the story?

If so then what is the REST OF THE STORY?

Why is he here?

Let's just say for a moment, just for discussion sake, that Jesus IS who he says he is.

The WORD made flesh and dwelling among us.

Let's say he came down from heaven.

Why? Why would he do that?

What was the mission?

What was the purpose?

Why did he come?

Again Jesus left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee into the district of Decapolis.

So let's start with a bit of geography

Sidon is NORTH of Tyre.

The Sea of Galilee is SOUTH EAST of Tyre

Decapolis sits on the SOUTH EAST side of the Sea of Galilee.

So this route would suggest the LONG WAY home.

Google maps would not take you this way.

Some have even suggested that Mark got it wrong and was somehow directionally challenged.

But I would suggest that there is a deeper meaning to this circuitous route.

It AVOIDS Galilee, which is Pagan territory, completely.

Now for some time Jesus has been TRYING to get away with his disciples to spend time with them.

For REST but even more importantly for the TEACHING.

Because these disciples were CHOSEN to carry the message.

And you CAN'T CARRY THE MESSAGE IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE STORY.

INCLUDING the REST OF THE STORY.

So he enters Decapolis.

Present day Lebanon.

Decapolis was actually 10 towns that had formed a colocation.

Kind of like the EU.

It was Roman territory.

They were not Jewish.

You would have had a lot of Hellenistic influence.

You know Greek gods like Baal.

To the practicing Jew this was considered enemy territory.

So the idea that this Jesus had ANYTHING to do with these Pagans was ridiculous.

That word PAGAN coming from PAGANO meaning from the country.

Not BAD people. They just haven't heard the Good News yet.

Jesus was healing these people. These Gentiles.

Remember the demonic chained to the graveyard?

Everybody knew about that guy.

He was scary.

He was as FAR away from a practicing Jew that one could get.

And how about the Saraphanician women with the sick daughter?

Jesus not only heals the daughter, from a distance of course because she was not even there, but he COMMENDS her for having the great faith.

So, as Jesus arrives in Decapolis, they did not really know WHO he was or anything about his message but they had certainly HEARD about him.

They had a PIECE of the story.

Probably something along the lines of "Hey man did you hear about that demon possessed guy in the graveyard?"

They chained that guy up and he broke through the chains.

This man Jesus shows up and the demons start TALKING to him!

He called them out of the man and sent them into some pigs.

And you know all those pigs ran off a cliff and killed themselves.

WHO told you that?

I'm serious man.

That is ridiculous. You can't POSSIBLY believe that.

No I am serious.

My cousin's neighbor's friend KNOWS the family.

He tells me those pig famers got SO upset that they passed around a petition to have him removed.

And that daughter of the Saraphenincan woman was about dead and she was healed (SNAP OF FINGERS) like that.

And she wasn't even there.

So, He is some kind of JEWISH HEALER.

So, THAT'S their part of the story.

And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged that he lay his hands on him.

Now if someone is born deaf it ALWAYS leaves an impediment in speech.

Because you can NOT FORM words if you cannot first HEAR words.

A deaf mute in the ancient world was categorized as being insane.

They were considered cursed by God and therefore unclean and part of the untouchables.

And of course we have no record as to how they were treated in Pagan territories, but one can assume a life lived in STIGMA and SEPARATION

If you touch this man you render yourself ritually unclean.

And to make matters even worse HE IS A GENTILE.

So here we have people, who obviously love this man, bringing him to Jesus and BEGGING him to lay hands on him, which according to the traditions of the elders will render him unclean and he does so immediately.

He is confronted with an outcast and he BECOMES an outcast.

So here we are.

The crowd is pushing in as the rumors are swirling.

People are getting up on their toes for a better look.

He took him off by himself away from the crowds.

Jesus is giving this man his full attention.

And in this moment becomes A PERSON.

Do we?

How often do we turn away from the homeless person or avert our eyes from the man or woman in the wheelchair.

We don't want to look.

We don't want to look because it makes us uncomfortable.

Because there is part of us that realizes we are too close and that COULD be us.

But hear me when I say it is not until we say "Hello" that the homeless person or that person in the wheel chair becomes A PERSON.

And this is what Jesus does.

Then using his own version of sign language he does FIVE things.

FIVE intimate signs because meets this man where he is at.

ONE, he puts his finger in the man's ears.

I imagine he is up in his face communicating I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH.

TWO, he SPITS on what I can only assume is his finger and he touches the man's tongue.

Which I got to say, is pretty darn intimate.

I remember one time I was with my brother and his young son, my nephew, sneezed leaving a trail of mucus on his shirt.

We had no napkin.

So my brother just reaches over and pinches it off his shirt and wiped it off on his pants!

I'm thinking that's pretty gross but then again in a weird way that was an incredibly intimate moment.

I seriously doubt he would ever do that for me.

I mean he loves me and all, he's my brother, but there are different levels of intimacy.

So anyway I would suggest that touching a man's tongue with saliva is a pretty intimate thing.

THREE, he looks up to heaven.

Looking up is a universal sign.

When someone looks up in prayer everybody knows what THAT'S all about.

You can be Jewish or Pagan, and you are going to know that this is calling on the divine.

So this man who is looking intently at Jesus KNOWS he is praying for him.

FOUR, he groans.

The deaf mute sees the PAIN in his face as he GROANS WITH EMPATHY.

All the suffering his deafness caused him.

FIVE, then he looked up to heaven groaned and said to him EPHATHA which is ARAMEIC for BE OPENED.

And BOOOOM Immediately three man's ears are opened and he speaks plainly.

Which the speaking plainly might actually be the greater miracle.

He did not go through ANY speech therapy.

Remember now, he has never heard a word and now he is speaking plainly.

As if he had NEVER been deaf.

But HERE is the REST OF THE STORY.

He orders him to tell no one and the more he told them not to, the more they proclaimed it.

Now, this is a bit odd, but we see this throughout Mark and as you might imagine, there has been much speculation around what has become to be known as the Messianic Secret.

Jesus does something miraculous which seems to PROVE who he is, but yet he says don't tell anyone.

Seems counterintuitive.

Well the Answer lies in the REST OF THE STORY.

He tells them to tell no one and they go tell everyone and what they are telling everyone is the story.

He has done all things well, he makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.

A Jewish Healer.

A prophet with this STRANGE message that can HEAL PEOPLE and FEED PEOPLE just like when God provided manna from heaven.

But they don't have the REST OF THE STORY.

SO ... WHAT IS THE REST OF THE STORY?

Well ... it is a story that no one really wanted to hear.

In the 8th Chapter of Mark, Jesus turned to his disciples and asked, who do the people say I am?

After several suggestions, he looked at them and said, OK, but who do YOU say I am?

That is when Peter pipes up and says "You are the Christ, the Messiah. The Son of the living God."

Which was a good moment for Peter. He was clearly inspired.

But then Jesus reveals, for the first time really, the REST OF THE STORY.

The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Chief Priests and the Scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

And Peter didn't like that at all.

He rebukes Jesus and says,

Get behind me Satan you are thinking as men do and not as God does.

Not a good moment for Peter.

The reason for the Messianic Secret is that word going out of the miracle healer from Nazareth is NOT the REST OF THE STORY.

We see this today in Christianity.

Everybody is looking for a healing and Jesus CAN heal you.

But never forget that ALL the people Jesus healed including Lazarus have got a grave somewhere.

Jesus can heal you but eventually you are going to die of something.

Every man woman and child he fed on that mountain that day were hungry again.

So, the REST OF THE STORY is that as we go through this life.

With ALL its PAIN and STRUGGLE.

JESUS HAS DEEP EMPATHY FOR YOU.

And he stands ready to touch every tongue on this planet.

Remember we were talking about WHY Jesus came?

If he is word made flesh why?

WHAT was his purpose?

WHAT was his mission?

Well ... that's the REST OF THE STORY.

The REASON God sent his only Son into this world is that Jesus defeated DEATH when he walked out of that tomb.

God has a great desire guide us through this life and into the next.

No matter WHAT circumstances we might find ourselves in.

Remember how we had talked about any person who is born deaf is going to have a speech impediment?

Because you can NOT FORM words if you cannot HEAR words.

Jesus said more than a few times "Anyone who has ears ought to hear."

May I suggest that if you have never READ the story or HEARD the story, then you don't know the story.

And if you DON'T know the story you certainly won't know the REST OF THE STORY.

And then you become SPIRITUALLY DEAF with a speech impediment because you can NOT FORM words that you never HEAR.

So today we read ONE paragraph in the Gospel of Mark.

And it is only PART of the story.

I challenge you this week.

Pick up your bible.

Dust it off.

Read a Gospel.

Any one.

But read it in a row.

From the beginning till the end.

Then check out what Peter and Paul and James and Timothy had to say about it.

And you will be on your way to knowing **THE REST OF THE STORY.**

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