

Father Chapin's Homily



SEPTEMBER 2, 2018 – RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

When you read the Gospels,
And you SHOULD take the time to read at least one of them,
You will find that Jesus really only had a problem with ONE group of people.
And it was NOT the thieves ... such as the thief of the cross.
It was NOT the Prostitutes or the Tax Collectors or anyone else deemed UNCLEAN by their sin.
No.
Jesus had a problem with the RELIGIOUS PEOPLE.
Whether that be the Scribes or a Pharisees.
The High Priests or the Sadducees.
Jesus had a problem with RELIGIOSITY.
And he did not have a LITTLE problem with it.
He had a BIG problem with it.
In fact, He went as far as calling them **SONS OF THE DEVIL**.
Which is something coming from the 2nd person of the blessed Trinity.
Your Father is the devil?
I think that many of us have an image of in our minds of Jesus.
TWO really.
ONE is the **PEACEFUL and SERENE** Jesus with his hands reached out with children on his lap and a Lamb at his feet.
The OTHER is his bleeding and **SUFFERING** on the cross.
And that is kind of it.
I HAVE seen a picture of a LAUGHING Jesus, in fact I have one, but I have never seen a picture of an ANGRY Jesus.
Or a FRUSTRATED Jesus which is clearly where he is in our Gospel today.
And sadly, I fear it is a FRUSTRATION that continues till this day.

When the Pharisees, with some Scribes who had come from Jerusalem, gathered around Jesus they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed hands for the Pharisees, in fact all Jews, did do not eat without carefully washing the hands

KEEPING THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS.

So, as a kid my Mom told me I had to wash my hands.

She was, like many mothers, concerned about germs.

Please understand that this has NOTHING to do with what we are talking about today.

Because today is NOT a sanitation issue.

This AIN'T ABOUT grabbing a bar of soap and quickly washing your hands.

THAT is NOT what this is about.

No.

Clearly THIS is about the TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS.

THAT is what this is all about.

It is about keeping the TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS.

And the ENTIRE Pharisaical system was based on the Tradition of the Elders.

And today we are going to talk about what happens when TRUE and HEARTFELT religion has a HEAD ON COLLISION with FALSE, EXTERNAL religion.

Today we are going to talk about the intersection between SCRIPTURE and TRADITION.

Let's start with SCRIPTURE and the whole idea of HAND WASHING.

Leviticus says, "You should wash your hands."

Of course, they had ZERO understanding of germs or bacteria or viruses.

But common sense says if you've been tending farm animals or butchering meat you should wash your hands before you eat.

PERIOD

So, Leviticus states, "You got to wash your hands" and that is ALL it says in regards to handwashing.

I mean OK you had SOME ceremonial washings that the priest did but that is it.

Moses was given the Law at Mount Sinai.

It was written down and called the Pentateuch.

But through the years the religious leadership wanted to PROTECT this Sacred LAW, so they built a fence around it through RITUALIZATION.

It started out as a handbook on HOW to keep the SACRED LAW.

By 200 AD, a Rabbi named HUDA combined ALL the traditions of the Elders and called it the MISHNA.

And SOMEWHERE along the way the focus shifted FROM the SACRED LAW as presented in scripture TO the TRADITIONS of the church.

In time, 30 CHAPTERS would be written in regard to the ceremonial cleansing of POTS AND PANS.

Not to mention a whole VOLUME dedicated to the WASHING OF HANDS.

I'm not kidding.

No wonder Jesus says,

You bind heavy burdens on people that they cannot even carry.

I mean LOOK at what these traditions do.

You have a small group of people who have the MEANS and the TIME and EDUCATION to read all these rules and then actually ATTEMPT to keep these traditions.

And then you have the REST of the world.

Just ordinary folks trying to grind their way through another day that, according to these rules, would make them unclean just about each and every day.

If they happen to brush up against a Gentile at the market place they are UNCLEAN.

If they happen to get blood on their hands or come into contact with anything dead.

UNCLEAN!

And if you happened to become UNCLEAN it required a BIG INTRICATE ceremonial cleansing.

Just to keep street legal.

You don't?

You were DEFILED and UNCLEAN.

You were BANISHED from the synagogue and EXCLUDED from righteous relationship with God.

That word DEFILE means to SULLY.

TO MAR,

TO SPOIL.

But it can ALSO mean to DESECRATE or PROFANE SOMETHING SACRED.

But in Greek DEFILE can ALSO mean TO SHARE.

The idea being that once things are SHARED they LOSE THEIR VALUE because they become ORDINARY.

Which is the very DEFINITION of the word profane.

When something sacred is accessible to EVERYONE it is no longer sacred.

Let me give you an example:

As Catholics we celebrate the Holy Eucharist at Mass.

Now to receive the Eucharist you must be a practicing Catholic in good standing.

Now should you want to become a Catholic the church has a process.

You go through classes and then you PROFESS that you SHARE our beliefs as Catholics and you are in COMMUNION with the faith.

Now let's suppose I was to walk out on the street and just start passing out hosts.

To anyone who should happen to pass by.

Then it becomes PROFANED.

It would become DEFILED.

And is no longer sacred.

Holiness is something that is SET APART for God.

God commands us in Leviticus and First Peter BE HOLY as I myself am holy.

And here is where it all breaks down.

The Pharisees and the Scribes are CONVINCED that one ACHIEVES holiness by following the TRADITIONS.

In fact, in their minds TRADITIONS were MORE important than the scriptures themselves.

Which is crazy.

Jesus said, ***“I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law to the last letter.”***

But he IS absolutely rejecting the TRADITIONS of the elders.

The Pharisees and the Scribes questioned him.

WHY do your disciples not follow the traditions of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?

Now try to forget about your serene and peaceful Jesus for a second and imagine fiery eyes with a furrowed brow.

Well did Isaiah prophesize about you hypocrites as it is written this people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me? In vain do they worship me? Teaching as doctrine’s human precepts you disregard Gods commandment but cling to human TRADITION.

WOW!

I love Jesus for a lot of things but ONE thing I love about him is he AIN’T SUBTLE.

Hypocrites.

Let that sink in.

You honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me?

You worship in vain?

You disregard the commandment of God but cling to human traditions.

And I think many of us might be tempted to think of these Pharisees as old men hunched over wearing robes with long curly fingernails, but HOLD ON THERE SPARKY!

We best be careful.

I would suggest that this hits quite bit closer to home than many of us would feel comfortable with.

This Parasitical mindset is alive and kicking today my friend.

But let’s stick with Jesus for a moment.

He goes on to say something revolutionary.

Understanding that Kosher Law is ALL about what goes INTO the body.

Because they had a theological belief system that taught ALL UNCLEANLINESS is external and comes INTO the body from the outside.

But Jesus dispels this and says this is a myth.

He goes directly against Kosher Law when he says that NOTHING can enter from the OUTSIDE and DEFILE a person.

But rather it is the things that come OUT FROM WITHIN that defile a person.

From their hearts come EVIL THOUGHTS.

UNCHASITY,

THEFT,

MURDER,

ADULTERY,

GREED,

MALICE,

DECEIT,

LICENTIOUSNESS,

ENVY,

BLASPHEMY,

ARROGANCE,

and FOLLY.

ALL of these evils come from WITHIN and they DEFILE.

So, Jesus flips the tables here as he makes it clear that this is NOT about YOU LOOKING GOOD on the outside.

This is about what is flowing from WITHIN you that determines whether you are righteous or not.

I was talking with this woman whose son got in big trouble with the law.

Through a series of poor and often violent choices he had really put himself in a bad situation.

And as the woman was talking she said, "He got in with the wrong crowd."

Suggesting, of course, that it was the influence of something outside of himself that caused the bad behavior.

Never even considering the possibility that well, maybe HE is the wrong crowd.

But this is the VICTIM mentality is prevalent in our world today.

But according to Jesus, this idea that we fall due to outside sources is just NOT true.

So HOW do we achieve holiness.

God wants us to be holy as he is holy, but how do we do that?

How do we avoid begin defiled?

How can you be Holy?

Well ... In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus says if you even look at a woman with lust you have already committed adultery and if you are angry with your brother you have already committed murder.

So, what he is saying is that SIN happens long before you take the action.

The sin of adultery begins with a look.

The sin of murder begins with a flash of anger.

Some time back I was watching a show about bees.

And it turns out that bees are quite interesting.

Their colonies are extremely organized.

Everybody's got a job.

Of course, you have the Queen Bee but then you got bees that work in the nursery, you got bees that scout for food, then of course you got your standard day laborer, the worker bee.

But they got a bee for everything.

They even have a BEE to handle the dead.

Oh YES, the BEE UNDERTAKER.

When a bee dies, their job is to drag the bee corpse some 10 feet from the hive to avoid it
CORRUPTING THE HIVE.

This is nature's way.

So anyway, I am watching this BEE show which was all about scientists trying to figure out how bees communicate with each other.

Because they did somehow.

They observed, which is what scientist do, they OBSERVED that when a bee found a food source it was not long before the whole hive leaned of it.

How does that happen?

So, they set up cameras all around the Bee Hive to study the bees.

They surrounded a hive and even put a camera IN the hive.

They put a bowl of sugar water about 30 feet from the hive and waited.

NOTHING HAPPENED.

And just before they were going to move that sugar bowl a bit closer, one lonely bee stumbled upon the sugar water.

So, they caught him and marked a small red dot on his back.

So, it flies back to the hive.

Now they have a camera IN the hive, so they see it come in.

And in amazement they watch as the bee starts to do this BEE DANCE.

Two turns to the left, back once to the right.

And all the time other bees were lining up to watch this bee dance.

Turns out the dance is geographical coordinates for the food source.

Soon those other bees flew straight to the food source.

And they caught those bees and carefully marked them with a green dot.

They flew back to the hive and did their own bee dance for others.

Soon the ENTIRE hive was aware of that sugar water.

You know ... THOUGHTS are a whole lot like BEES.

We have thoughts that fly in and out of our brain by the thousands every day.

Some conscious some subconscious.

Just to drive a car to a store requires 100s of thousands of thoughts most of which we don't even focus on.

But occasionally a thought flies in that OTHER thoughts start to line up with.

Other thoughts start watching as this thought does its dance.

Maybe a thought of lust.

Maybe a thought of anger.

Maybe a thought of envy or resentment.

Maybe a thought of fear.

In time MORE thoughts line up to watch the dance.

As the dance goes on that thought becomes FANTASY.

And in time FANTASY becomes POSSIBILITY as a plan starts to organize with other thoughts.

And then the POSSIBILITY becomes a PROBABILITY as the brain has been lassoed and held captive by the ONE thought.

And now ALL that is left is the act itself.

But essentially the cake is baked.

I was talking to a guy in Alcoholics Anonymous.

By the way I am a fan of this program.

So, we were talking about relapse and he said that often the relapse happens LONG before the first drink.

It can happen WEEKS or even week's even months before.

And it ALWAYS will begin ONE thought.

So, what to do?

Can we slay the THOUGHT before it becomes sin?

Well we can try,

But these thoughts have a way of resurrecting themselves.

So, in and of ourselves, the answer is NO.

I can NOT, NOT SIN.

I have NO power to fix it.

WHY?

Because a broken computer can NOT fix itself.

But much like the Bee Undertaker there IS something that can drag that thought out of my hive

So, it won't line up with other thoughts and corrupt my hive.

It is a power that is within me.

It is a power that is in YOU.

And that POWER is called the Holy Spirit.

And if you call upon that SPIRIT it is a THOUGHT SLAYER and like the BEE UNDERTAKER it will drag that thought right out of you.

So, as we come to a close today, let me leave you with one last thought regarding these TRADITIONS versus the MATTERS OF THE HEART.

I am in NO WAY bashing the TRADITIONS OF MEN.

I love celebrating Mass.

It is a TRADITION that has been going on since the Last Supper.

But you can get lost in the ritual.

One can look at a beautiful painting of the sun but will never feel its heat.

The way you feel the heat of the Holy Spirit is you go very personally, and I suggest you do this alone, and contemplate the cross.

In order for something to become clean something else must become dirty.

And as we struggle to try to WASH ourselves.

We get everything dirty before we get anything clean.

Because it is ONLY Jesus who can clean us.

As he took the FILTH of this world hanging on that cross.

So, my friends.

We need to THINK ABOUT OUR THINKING.

We need to, of course, strive to be Holy while at the same time realizing that in and of ourselves we will NEVER BE CLEAN no matter how often we wash ourselves.

We will never be able to UNSIN ourselves.

But I know a man.

Jesus.

And he is standing with you right now.

And he is MORE than willing to drag away the corpse of your sin.

All YOU need to do is raise your eyes to him and accept what he has already done for you.

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