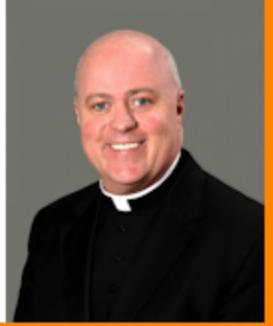


# Father Chapin's Homily



*November 11, 2018 – WIDOW'S MIGHT*

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We live in a world today where there are many gods.

And of course, I am NOT just talking about the gods of other religions.

We live in a world where many of us CREATE our own god.

Or what I call the god of our imagination.

A god with whom we feel comfortable.

This is the world of ...

**Hey, you know I am not all that RELIGIOUS, but I am very SPIRITUAL.**

A very popular and prevalent denomination of our day.

Through the years I have heard much about this god of their understanding.

And the ONE common denominator that runs through such accounts is that it does not really require all that much.

It's the god of LIVE and LET LIVE.

And as far as any ETHIC or MORALITY.

Or how one should live day to day if you follow THIS god, well then that is ultimately up to YOU.

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Truth becomes relevant as YOU become your OWN god deciding what is in fact good and what is in fact evil.

An echo rising up from Genesis.

The BIG LIE that has been with us since man was created.

“Surely you will not die. God knows full well that if you eat of that fruit you will become AS God knowing the difference between good and evil.”

Which sounded pretty good.

Especially the “Being as God part.”

But let’s get back to this whole idea of the god of our own imagination.

I have heard many versions of this god.

One of the more popular beliefs is god as THE ONE.

And THE ONE is this impersonal energy that all of humanity will return to someday.

The omega point.

But if you really dig deeper as to what these gods of our own imagination in fact are it will not take too long before you realize that the god of our own imagination is really a reflection of OURSELVES.

Jean Paul Sartre wrote that the very definition of hell is eternity spent in a room full of mirrors.

Might be kind of fun for the first couple 100 years but after a while gets a bit tedious.

But this is where so many of us find ourselves.

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We have made OURSELVES the God of our own lives.

And since we have made ourselves the highest authority in our own lives it is US who get to decide what is right and what is wrong and what is good and what is evil.

Now we might believe in some other god of course.

Maybe one that will help us out in the end.

But as far as a power that is greater than ourselves to which we are accountable.

NOT SO MUCH.

Because ultimately it falls to us.

The god in the mirror.

The god of YOURSELF.

And so, in ONE sense the snake was right.

He said if you eat of the fruit of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil than you will BE AS GOD, but it comes at a terrible cost.

God clearly said to Adam if you eat of this fruit it will KILL YOU.

Emotionally,

Physically,

Spiritually.

And that is of course EXACTLY what happened.

A sizable group amongst us have become the god of our own creation.

And we don't even know it.

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And we talked about this last week.

It is one thing to be blind and know it and it is quite another to be blind and be convinced that you can see.

And that is our world.

**Blindness convinces that it sees.**

A world that has created its own god and does the best it can hoping in the end it will get us to heaven.

But here is the rub.

This is NOT Christianity and in no way represents what Jesus teaches.

So many of us have reduced Jesus to some kind of mystery teacher of ethic.

Just one item on the menu of religious choices.

But if that is true then Jesus is a liar.

So, with THAT said let's talk about the state of religion today.

Much of religion is rooted in TRADITION.

The tradition of the elders.

Meaning their ancestors.

Most of the time we are either born into a denomination or we marry into one.

Now what many of these traditions have in common is that a man or a woman will approach a podium and open a book to read few verses and then pontificate on its meanings to the members of the church.

A modern-day SHEPHERD guiding its flock.

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Now generally the subject matter deals with such things as HOW you live the GOOD LIFE of a Christian.

And what is UNDERSTOOD by many is that whoever is giving this homily is a LIVING EXAMPLE of this Christian walk.

And the people will come to this person to GUIDE them into a relationship with God.

They will hear stories about Jesus.

They will hear stories from the Old Testament.

Letters from Paul and then the pastor explains them.

BUT ... what happens when this MODEL OF FAITH, this PARAGON OF VIRTUE who speaks from the podium staggers or even falls?

Mark Twain wrote we are all like the moon.

We ALL have a dark side that we do not want anyone to see.

The secret self.

Many a congregation has been blown apart by a staggering preacher.

Even Scriptures are very clear.

We all sin and fall short.

There IS no, EXCEPT preachers.

Jesus says that NO ONE is righteous by the law.

WE ALL FALL SHORT

We ALL SIN

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And NO ONE stands righteous before the father.

So, if you are relying on a man or a woman standing in a podium.

Or some guy wearing a collar on TV to guide you into the eternal realm.

Which is unquestionably the MOST important issue of life.

That's ... well ... pretty risky.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke Jesus says,

**A blind man cannot lead a blind man, they will both fall into a pit.**

Now don't get me wrong.

I am not saying you can't learn a few things.

I'm just saying you cannot put PEOPLE on a spiritual pedestal and rely SOLELY on them as your SPIRITUAL SHERPA .... Well .... you will be disappointed.

Because we are ALL flawed.

We all have a dark side.

How often I hear "The church is full of a bunch of hypocrites!"

Or I will hear a story about some mean priest.

Well He did this, or he did that.

Some GREAT offense that someone endured at the hands of hypocrites.

And they have thrown out Jesus with the dirty bathwater of religion.

There is a whole lot of wreckage out there at the hands of HYPOCRISY.

And if that is YOU ...

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Number ONE.

Is the church is full of a bunch of hypocrites?

YES.

And the reason of that is very simple.

To BE a hypocrite you must FIRST have the truth.

And the CHURCH is where TRUTH lives.

Number TWO.

And WAY more importantly.

If you're going to allow some hypocrite to deprive you from having a CONSIIOUS CONTACT with your God.

The most important thing anyone could ever have on this side of life.

And the other for that matter.

You might want to rethink that.

When a hypocrite causes one to fall from the faith Satan gets a two-for-one.

Number THREE.

If you are out there looking for the PERFECT church.

One that is FREE from all hypocrisy.

With ZERO drama.

The perfect expression of heaven on earth.

And you happen to find it.

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PLEASE don't join it.

Because you will ruin it.

We are ALL hypocrites on some level or the other.

Jesus put it this way.

Why not focus on the log in your own eye than the speck of your brothers.

Anyway, let's get talk about our Gospel.

We are in Chapter 12 of Mark.

And if you have been with us over the last couple weeks the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes have been just going after Jesus in a big way.

He has made them look like fools.

Now he moves to offense.

Now last week, if you recall, there was one Scribe who came to Jesus with a question.

And it was a TRAP question.

One that would make Wolf Blitzer proud.

And if you recall it ended with Jesus recognizing that he answered with understanding.

And he commended him saying "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Because you see Jesus did not approach these people with any hate or malice.

I truly believed he loved them all.

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But they wanted him dead.

Jesus was challenging everything they stood for.

And when he overthrew the tables of the money changers ... boy I tell you what.

He challenged the very heart of what they do.

The LIFE BLOOD of the BIG SHOW.

You don't want to mess with the money.

The LIFE BLOOD of the BIG SHOW.

So today we have Jesus in the temple.

He is teaching the crowds

**Beware of the scribes who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings  
in the market place.**

Of course, back then everyone wore a tunic and robe.

Both men and women.

But a Rabbi or Scribe wore white linens with blue tassels.

This was according to the Old Testament, a way of identifying yourself as a

FLOWER OF YAWHEH

Even Jesus himself wore tassels.

But some of these Scribes had a habit of wearing tassels that were long, so they  
could stand out.

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I knew this priest once who used to wear long cuffs, so everybody could see his cufflinks.

He is not a priest anymore.

As far as GREETING IN THE MARKET PLACE the Talmud taught that when one of these people walked by you needed to stand in recognition of their righteousness.

Can you imagine?

Imagine every time I walked into a room people bowed in my presence.

I think that might go to my head.

I might be thinking “I’m a pretty righteous dude.”

It is called EGO which means EASING GOD OUT.

Can you see how after a while this would all be about me?

And that power is intoxicating.

We see in our culture and it is addicting.

Many lose their way.

But getting back to these Pharisees.

They were so puffed up and drunk in their power that they totally MISSED the Messiah standing right in front of them.

Despite the miracles.

They were BLINDED by their own power.

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And contempt prior to investigation is a guarantee you will live in everlasting ignorance.

Very much like last week.

**Blindness convinced that it sees.**

Which, when you think about it, is the perfect summation of our world.

Totally blind and convinced that it sees.

Kind of sums it all up right up doesn't?

*They devour the houses of the widow and as a pretext recite lengthy prayers they will receive a very serious condemnation.*

Now in that day if someone died young, or BEFORE THEIR TIME as we say, it was a sign that they were CURSED by god.

The THEOLOGY OF THE DAY taught that ALL misfortune, whether that be DISEASE or BIRTHDEFECTS or and EARLY DEATH are signs of DIVINE PUNISHMENT divine punishment for a secret in.

So, a widow was GUILTY by association.

She was damaged goods.

And she had to rely on her family or her husband's family to support her.

Which was most of the time an UNWELCOME burden.

Which is interesting because according to Leviticus that God makes it very clear that HIS will that the widow and the orphan be taken care of.

But that was NOT happening.

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In that day if a WEALTHY man died leaving his wealth to his wife who is now a widow.

She was not trusted to manage her own estate.

That would fall to the Scribes.

They were the lawyers of the day would take over to manage the estate.

For a nice FEE of course.

A FEE to which THEY would set the terms and price.

And once again this is alive and well today.

Jesus says they will receive a VERY SEVERE CONDEMNATION.

So, THIS is the context.

So, watch this shift.

**Jesus sits down opposite the treasury and starts to watch the people.**

He is watching how people are putting money into the treasury.

Remember this is the LIFE BLOOD of the Temple.

So here Jesus is watching how the crowds are putting money in the treasury and many of the rich people were putting in large sums.

Now the temple was made up of concentric rings.

The further you moved into the center the more exclusive the temple became.

The outside courtyard was naturally the largest.

It was called the Gentile Court.

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Everybody could go there so it made sense that this is where they decided to put the offering basket.

But of course, this is the TEMPLE, so they are not going to pass any ordinary basket around.

No. There were 13 boxes huge brass horns.

You would drop the coins in the thin part on top and it would clang, clang, clang on the way down.

By design.

If you put in a huge amount it made a huge corresponding clang, clang, clang, so everybody knows.

Kind of like ringing the bell at Captain D's

So, all these horns are out there and there for all kinds of different charities.

And people would come in a pour in their tithes.

Some you get a clink, clink, clink.

But if you are rich you put in a BUNCH of coins it would sound like you hit the jack pot in Vegas.

**BING, BING, BING!**

**WOW!!!!** There goes a holy guy.

And Jesus is watching all this.

And here she comes.

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*A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.*

It is called a LEPTA

The smallest coin available.

Now imagine this scene.

Jesus is taking all this in.

And when he sees this he calls his disciples over.

He says

**Amen, Amen I say to you, the poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury for they have all contributed from the surplus of their wealth and she from her poverty has contributed all she had. Her whole livelihood.**

I have heard people's use this scripture to talk about stewardship.

**Brothers and sister, you need to give till it hurts or it don't count.**

But I don't that is the point that Jesus is trying to make here.

He had just talked about how the widow whose household is being devoured.

And now he is watching the system that is devouring it.

It is a clear example of a RUNAWAY THEOLOGY that is devouring its poor.

But what he also saw a proud woman.

Head held high.

She had faith in God.

She believed that God would bless her if she was obedient.

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So, she dropped her coins in.

But at the same time, I think he was frustrated at what he saw that day.

Soon we will see him react as he leaves that temple.

**The day is coming where not one stone will be laying upon another stone.**

I imagine he approached her as he was leaving.

Maybe he said something like “I know you love my father, let me tell you about his son.”

You see my friends, whether you believe in a god of your own creation.

Or whether you are relying on something else to get you there.

Or maybe you have become so disgusted with the hypocrisy you see you have thrown out Jesus with the dirty bathwater of religion.

If you have a HEART that is truly seeking.

If you are struggling with the existential dilemma.

WHO AM I?

WHY AM I HERE?

WHERE DID GOD GO?

In very much the same way, Jesus is tapping YOU on the shoulder and saying

I see your heart.

I know you love my Father, let me introduce myself.

I am his Son and I want to guide you to my Father.

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And TOGETHER we are going to take you home.

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