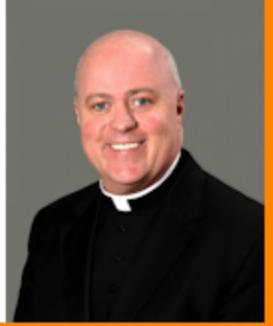


# Father Chapin's Homily



SEPTEMBER 16, 2018 – Bold

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So, the other day I was watching one of those science channels.

And they were talking about how as they stare out into the FARTHEST regions of space they are starting to discover PLANETS that are orbiting OTHER stars in OTHER galaxies.

Imagine that.

It is really fantastic science.

And it really IS incredible what the human imagination can conceive.

And then, in time, prove.

There is NOTHING else out there, at least that WE know about that can do that.

I mean can even come close.

And I can't help but be reminded of a passage in Genesis.

God speaks everything into existence with let there be this or let there be that but when he comes to us he does something different.

When God created Adam and Eve in his own image.

And what is the image of God?

Well ... the image of God is CREATOR.

And he created us in his own image, so he created us to create.

God spoke everything into existence.

WE speak our lives into existence.

We speak our creations.

God has a will.

And WE, and this is unique in ALL the universe, also have WILL

We can individually and collectively will to do exactly what we will to do.

But back to the science show.

These planets that they are finding.

It seems that the primary motivation behind this exploration is finding planets that could possibly sustain life.

And many will say, and have said, that due to the sheer numbers of BILLIONS of galaxies and TRILLIONS of planets out there that STATISTICALLY SPEAKING, chances are pretty good that we are NOT alone and that there IS, in fact, life out there somewhere.

And understand I am NOT here to debate that issue.

But I bring it up to ask this question ...

WHAT IF that was NOT the case.

WHAT IF it is true that the ONLY life in the universe is US and that we were created in the image of God.

WHAT IF it is true that He knows the number of hairs on our heads?

WHAT IF we were THAT unique?

WHAT IF we were THAT special.

It is thought that in the history of our world about 300 billion people have walked on the planet earth.

We got about 7 billion walking around now.

WHAT IF, the ONE who is behind all of this, HAS KNOWN and currently KNOWS every single one of us.

All 300 Billion People.

Intimately.

WHAT IF he knows ALL of us and about ALL our lives?

Our hopes and our dreams.

Our disappointments and suffering.

And WHAT IF what he wants is a RELATIONSHIP with each and every one of us.

But of course, there would be a catch.

He gave us WILL.

And with that will we can freely choose much like the will that HE has.

God wants us to FREELY CHOOSE to have a relationship with him.

UN-Manipulated,

UNCOARSED,

But to FREELY CHOOSE an intimate relationship with what created everything.

I have come to believe that it is EASIER to believe that there is OTHER LIFE out there in space than to believe the idea that it is JUST US in the entire universe with the eye of God upon us.

But WHAT IF?

What if this perfect sphere that can sustain life IS God's most PRECIOUS DIAMOND in all the universe?

And speaking of diamonds ...

Remember how this show was finding new planets?

Turns out they have discovered a PLANET out there where there is SO MUCH gravity and SO MUCH PRESSURE that they believe that the PLANET ITSELF is a diamond.

Caused by MASSIVE amounts of pressure.

Like that old song “Like a diamond in the sky.”

And consider how a diamond forms.

When LIFE dies one of the major by-products of death is carbon.

And when carbon is put under tremendous pressure, a diamond is created.

Which brings us to today’s Gospel which one could say is THE DIAMOND in scripture created by a WHOLE LOT OF PRESSURE.

Now if you were with us last week you would recall that Jesus is in a foreign land.

He is where no self-respecting Jew would spend much time,

The Bad Lands.

He is perceived as a Jewish Healer and a Jewish Prophet as he is ministering to Gentiles.

Which to any self-respecting righteous Jew would be unheard of.

Because, Yahweh is the God of Israel.

We are in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 8.

It begins with Jesus again feeding 4,000 people.

But this time he is feeding Gentiles

And bringing them the message of the Kingdom of God.

Now the Pharisees, who ran the temple were deeply troubled by this man out of Nazareth.

A man who SEEMED to be doing great miracles and signs from heaven but was acting like a scoundrel from Hell.

Disregarding the Traditions of the elders.

So, they go to him, and I LOVE this, they argue with him and demand a sign from heaven!

Now keep in mind there have already been plenty of signs.

One very recently when he healed a man who had been DEAF and MUTE since birth.

Who was unable to speak because of his deafness.

And NOT ONLY does he heal the man by creating ears in a man, where there had previously not been there, so something out of nothing, but he created a perfect speech that had never existed before.

So, the verdict is in my friend.

It is undeniable.

So, what seems to be the problem with these religious leaders?

Well ... the problem is best summed up as THE THREAT OF GOODNESS.

Understand now, these are not EVIL people.

In fact, they were considered very good people.

They lived by The Traditions.

They set the bar for everybody ELSE on HOW to be a good person.

How to be good enough.

So, it seems that the BIGGEST force against Jesus was NOT necessarily the EVIL of the world, but rather those who insisted on clinging on to and REMAINING ATTACHED to that which they perceived as good.

Which was their Traditions ... which made them good enough.

They didn't not know this man Jesus out of Nazareth.

They knew NOTHING about him.

But what they DID know was that even IF Jesus WAS good, their Traditions were better.

Are you starting to feel the pressure here?

How often do I hear, “Well you know I really should go to church more often?”

I think the BIGGEST thing that keeps most people from coming to church is that they feel like they are GOOD ENOUGH, and they are living pretty good lives and they certainly are not evil.

They are, by most people’s standards, a GOOD PERSON and they don’t need a Savior.

And, if they don’t need a Savior they don’t need Jesus.

Not that they have any real animus toward Jesus.

In fact, Jesus is greatly respected by many.

A great teacher. Like Buddha or Gandhi.

But they don’t need a Savior because their traditions are good enough.

I GOT THIS. I’M FINE.

The THREAT OF GOODNESS.

Our Gospel picks up in Mark 8 verse 27.

But you’ve got to read scripture in a row for it to make sense, so picking up just before this ...

Jesus heals the blind man in Bethesda.

And it is a most UNUSUAL healing.

Only found in Mark.

Jesus makes mud out of spittle and rubs it into the man eyes.

He asked him, “Do you see anything?”

And looking up the man said, “I see people looking like trees and walking.”

So, Jesus, a SECOND time lays his hands on him and BOOM, his sight is fully restored and he sees clearly.

Now All you Pharisees out there looking for a sign, here it is.

Remember, Jesus has healed people from a distance.

Remember, the SARAPHANEICAN woman was healed by merely touching his garment.

But here, Jesus must lay hands on this man twice.

Why?

Well I think we find the answer in today's Gospel as the pressure continues.

Jesus looks at his disciples and says, "Who do people say I am?"

And that IS the question, isn't it?

So, they say, "Well some say you are John the Baptist raised from the dead.

Others say you are Elijah who is supposed to come and announce the coming of the Messiah and usher in the Messianic age.

Others say you are one of the prophets reincarnated."

Then Jesus turns to them and asked them a question.

And it is a very important question.

In fact, it could be the most important question you are EVER asked.

Because, how you answer it determines just about every other question you could be asked.

Jesus turn and says, "But who do YOU say I am?"

And Peter says, "You are the Messiah, the Christ, the son of the living God."

Now, we take this statement for granted because so many of us grew up with hearing about Jesus.

But what Peter is suggesting is RADICAL.

He is suggesting that Jesus is somehow the CULMINATION of all that has come before.

Every word of scripture.

Every law.

Every Tradition.

ALL pointing to the PROMISE of the Kingdom of God returning to Israel in the form of the promised Messiah.

This is a BIG moment.

Jesus even confirms the fact that Peter is illuminated in other accounts of the same story.

Peter and the disciples could suddenly SEE.

But watch now.

The pressure is about to ratchet up 100-fold.

He begins to teach them for the first time that he must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders and the chief purists and the scribes and be killed and rise after three days.

It says he SPOKE THIS PLAINLY very much to bring back to mind the DEAF MUTE speaking plainly.

He is taking off the gloves and speaking to them very directly.

And the reaction is immediate.

Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to REBUKE him.

The Greek EPITMAO.

A very strong word.

Expressing sharp disapproval.

We see this word often used when Jesus is commanding evil forces and evil spirits to flee.

But here we have Peter using this language with Jesus.

This is not good.

I imagine he's probably got him by the arm and clutching him as he gets up in his face.

And Jesus turns around.

In my mind's eye He's ripping his arm away from Peter and looking at his disciples as he says GET BEHIND ME SATAN.

**You are thinking as man does and not as God does.**

Now you want to talk about going from a high to a low?

Peter goes from the ILLUMINATED SEER to SATAN in 3 versus.

Champ to chump.

That's a fast fall.

But I have a question.

Did Jesus really think his buddy Peter was Satan?

Well ... no, but I think he was quite accidently channeling Satan here and more specifically that third temptation back in the desert.

Remember that one?

He took him to mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said, "You can have all this if you just bow to me."

"You can be Messiah if you want to.

You don't have to suffer.

You don't have to be rejected.

You don't have to mess with the Romans

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE

All you have to do is bow to me.”

And Jesus understood the horror of the cross.

And not just the PHYSICAL nature of that horror but the SPIRITUAL nature of taking on the sins of 300 billion people.

I imagine that temptation had been harassing him like a fly in the back of his mind ever since.

And now it is coming from the mouth of Peter.

So,

What is Satanic?

**You are thinking not as God does but as human beings do.**

The Pharisees, with all their traditions rejecting Jesus, were thinking not as God does but as human beings do.

This world, with its Traditions REJECTS the idea of a Shepherd or a Savior.

We are living under the illusion that we are GOOD ENOUGH.

The funeral parlor whispers of, “He was a good man, so he is in heaven,” continue.

You know what the Bible has to say about that?

Matthew, Chapter 7 verse 22

Many people will come to me on that day and say Lord, Lord did we not prophesy IN YOUR NAME?

Did we not drive out demons and in your name?

And perform many works in YOUR NAME and Jesus says,

And then I will tell them plainly I never knew you.

I don't know who you are.

I don't believe we have ever met.

So, let's pause for a moment.

Let's get back to where we started.

WHAT IF the Creator of this universe knows who you are and wants to have a relationship with you?

What would that even look like?

Would he pull back a cloud and say, "Hey we gotta talk?"

I don't think so. We would run.

But getting back to our Gospel today the pressure is really starting to build.

The diamond is emerging.

And I can really relate to Peter, you know.

Every morning I see him in the mirror.

We are alike in so many ways.

And here he is.

After having a front row seat to what can only be described as the most amazing events of human history ...

He has just been illuminated by God and the first to speak out loud the TRUTH of who in fact Jesus is.

But AT THE SAME TIME when Jesus starts talking about suffering and being rejected and being killed, that made NO sense.

That was not on the resume of a Messiah.

WHAT WORLD would have the Messiah suffer and rejected?

Much less DIE.

WHAT WORLD is that?

So as Peter grips the arm of Jesus, the **PRESSURE CRESCENDOS** as he rebukes him saying “What are you talking about? What **WORLD** are you talking about?”

And Jesus answers, **GOD’S WORLD.**

**THAT’S** what I’m talking about.

**GOD’S WORLD.**

Here it is.

So, pay attention.

Because this is where the **DIAMOND ERUPTS** from a ton of pressure and a mass of dead carbon.

He summoned his crowds and his disciples and said, “Whoever wished to come after me must deny himself take up his cross and follow me.”

Remember we were talking about **WHAT IF** the Creator knew you and wanted to have a relationship?

What would that look like?

Number **ONE**,

One must deny himself

What does that mean?

Well it has **EVERYTHING** to do with your thinking.

The Pharisees were quite sure that they were right.

Peter was quite sure **HE** was right.

Denial of oneself, which sometimes requires **NOT** trusting one’s own thinking, is the beginning of following.

Number **TWO**,

Take up your cross.

So often when a difficult situation presents itself, such as Aunt Mable, you will hear “Well I guess that’s just my cross to bear.”

Really?

If that was true, ALL of humanity including EVIL PEOPLE, would be bearing a cross.

Because, suffering falls on us all.

So, what IS a cross?

Well in a literal sense the cross was a particularly cruel form of capital punishment devised by the Romans to serve as a deterrent for the lands that they occupied.

The victim was nailed to a cross and left to slowly suffocate as he collapses under the weight of his own body.

It was designed to be slow and horrible.

Crucifixion is really more about what happens BEFORE death than then the actual death.

And what happens before death is total SHAME and HUMILIATION.

But, back to our question,

WHAT IF God knows all about us?

HOW can we know him back?

Well it BEGINS with DENYING YOURSELF.

DENY your own conclusions.

DENY your own desires.

DENY your own thinking.

And SEEK what Jesus is trying to reveal to you.

THEN you will be thinking as God does and not as human begins do.

It all BEGINS with US willing to come after Jesus.

And to be willing to NOT completely trust our own thinking.

And to be willing to give up our own TRADITIONS.

Remember the PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

The man was willing to sell everything he had to buy?

Jesus is offering you ETERNAL LIFE my friend.

What could be more valuable than that?

Then finally PICK UP YOUR CROSS.

Jesus said if you deny him he will deny you.

Are you willing to stand with Jesus in this fallen world?

Or, will you quietly deny him with your silence?

All of Heaven REVERES THE CROSS.

All of Hell is terrified of it.

Meanwhile humanity more or less IGNORES it.

And if you do not know what your cross is....

Well then, HOW can you possibly carry it?