

## Homily For Tuesday of the 12th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

### St Peter's 8:30am Mass - June 21, 2022

(St. Aloysius Gonzaga)

**2 Kings 19:9-36** "Thus says the God of Israel, I have heard your prayer. The king shall not enter the city."

**Psalms 48:1-10** "God upholds his city forever. He has shown himself a sure defence."

**Matthew 7:6,12-14** "The gate is narrow and the road hard that leads to life, and few take it."

### Now That's Golden

#### Introduction

There is nothing new under the sun. One of the early heresies has made a comeback in the age of the technology we find so attractive. The God of the New Testament is seen as loving and kind, replacing the angry and vengeful Old Testament God. The Church after Vatican II is seen as enlightened and modern so we can leave behind the boring and repressive pre Vatican II Church. In those examples, God used to be harsh and mean, but he sent Jesus to be nice. This whole idea breaks down if we realize the truth, that Jesus is NOT nice. He loves. He is merciful. But he is not nice. Nice is what I am when I want people to like me. There is a big difference. The Gospel passages from the sermon on the mount come to an end today, with three points: What is holiness, the 'golden rule', and the two paths.

#### Matthew

Holiness means set aside for covenant relationship. Things that are holy are consecrated for worship. The profane is everything else. The sacred (or holy) and the profane are two realities. In the Our Father, we pray that God's name may be hallowed or holy. Profanity is taking the holy name of God and using it for an unholy purpose. The early Church applied this idea to the Holy Eucharist. Dogs and swine are derogatory terms for pagans. Jesus uses the image of dogs and pigs as profane. In the ancient middle east, dogs were scavengers, not pets. Pigs were not just physically unclean but, for the Jews, ritually unclean as well.

The good news of the kingdom is to be shared. That's why we talk so much about evangelization today. However, that Good News is so sacred and so valuable that it must not be subjected to the contempt of those who have no interest in faith or repentance. If people show open disdain for God's holiness, then it is wise to withdraw and to take the good news elsewhere. Saint Francis of Assisi says that "When the priest offers Jesus on the altar and takes him somewhere, all people should bow their knees and surrender to the Lord, the living and true God, praise, glory and devotion." (Saint Francis of Assisi) Pope Benedict XVI reminds the modern world that the "The liturgy is 'God's work'. We must dispose ourselves through a prayerful attitude, with discipline, peace and reverence, without rushing. We are in the sight of God!."

After holiness, we have the golden rule. It is similar to other statements in the Old Testament and other religions. Do to others what you would like them to do to you. In the past it was often about getting back in kind what you do. Now this is offered as the guiding principle that sums up the whole of how disciples are to live. It's the whole law and the prophets, Jesus says. Later Jesus will frame it as the two great commandments: Love God. Love your neighbour.

Finally, we have the dramatic conclusion to the sermon. There are two roads. One leads to heaven. It is difficult and is even hard to find. People think if you follow God, the road will be easy. Some saint has said that if life is easy you may be on a detour.

The wide and comfortable road has lots of traffic drifting along without a problem. But this road ends with destruction. Jesus sees many being swept along in this direction. He is warning us against the currents of a sinful and selfish world that would carry us away from the kingdom the Lord has prepared for us.

Some think that the Church should conform itself to the world so that we will be more friendly. This has never been the way of the Gospel message. It is good news and promises much but it is also demanding. There is nothing easy about following the Gospel. If we think that, then we are dishonouring the saints, like Aloysius Gonzaga.

## **St. Aloysius Gonzaga**

He chose the religious life at nine years old. Some come to holiness slowly and over a long life. His life was to be short, like St. Therese of Lisieux later on. He made a personal vow of chastity. We tend to think of saints as having a holiness that ordinary people cannot attain. However, St. Aloysius knew to guard himself from temptation. As a safeguard against sexual temptation he always kept his eyes downcast in the presence of women. I love that it says many tried to dissuade him from his chosen vocation. Perhaps some of them had good intentions but they were recommending an easier path. On the way to becoming a priest he died while tending those suffering from the plague at the age of 23. On the night of his death, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi had a vision of him being received into great glory.

## **2 Kings**

Yesterday, 2 Kings described the end of the northern kingdom. They were on the easy path of being like the nations around them. They worshipped gods who had no power. Their path ended in destruction. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel were lost as they were dispersed. Today's passage has Judah being threatened. Hezekiah, the greatest king of Judah after David. He is the son of the worst king ever, Ahaz. He restores true worship. Assyria believes that Judah will fall like Samaria because it's the same God they worship.

But Hezekiah trusted in God first before his impossible task against a huge invading force. We might want to take note of Hezekiah's prayer, which begins with telling God who he is. This is not arrogance but really a reminder to himself of their covenant relationship, of the holiness of God and the love he has for his children.

## **Conclusion/Call to Action**

Yesterday it was about splinters and beams. It's comfortable to judge others but our own faults are so close to us it is easy to miss them. That's the beam in our eye. Today we see the narrow way that leads to life and how few find it. Why is

that? Is it reserved for a chosen few? Not at all. The message of Christ is that the passage to eternal life is open to all, but it is "narrow" because it is demanding. No one is privileged. This way requires commitment, self-denial and the mortification of our selfishness. But the reward is so great, there is no comparison of which road is better. Jesus, the holy one of God, is on that road with us. He is not nice but he sure is good. And he loves us enough to always help us find the path if we are willing. That's not only the truth. That's golden.

### **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *The clean of hands and pure of heart shall climb the mountain of the Lord and stand in his holy place.*

**Collect:** *O God, grant through the merits and intercession of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga that we may imitate him in penitence.*

**2 Kings:** *The king of Assyria sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, Do not let your God deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into my hand. You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and prayed: "O Lord the God of Israel, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes O Lord and see. Hear the words sent to mock the living God. Save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are God alone." Then Isaiah sent to Hezekiah, saying: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I have heard your prayer. The king of Assyria shall not come into this city. For I will defend it for my own sake and for that of my servant David. That very night the angel of the Lord struck down one hundred eighty five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. Then King Sennacherib left and went home.*

**Psalms:** *God upholds his city forever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. God has shown himself a sure defence. Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth.*

**Matthew:** *Jesus said, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you. In everything do to others as you would have them do to you. For this is the law and the prophets. Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*