

Homily For Tuesday of the 24rd Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - September 17, 2019

Col 2:6-15 "When you were dead in trespasses, God made you alive together with him."

Psalms 145 "Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever."

Luke 6:12-19 "Jesus spent the night in prayer and, when day came, he called his disciples and chose 12."

Walk With Blameless Heart

Introduction

"Tell us about a time when you worked with a team and had to deal with a situation that threatened the project that your team was responsible for." This is the kind of question that is very common in the corporate world when someone is being interviewed for pretty much any position. The technique has various copyright names but it all goes under the category of 'behavioural descriptive interviewing'. So, instead of asking, "What would you do if you were working with a difficult person," they ask, "Tell us about when you did work with a difficult person, how did you handle it and what was the result." The theory is that past behaviour predicts future performance.

Timothy

This technique came out as a new invention a number of years ago but it certainly looks like Paul already wrote the book on it. Not only does he list a number of the personality characteristics that a bishop or deacon should have and be known for, but they should already have a resume of experience at doing what they will be called to do in their leadership roles.

Whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. He must be above reproach, temperate, sensible, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent, not quarrelsome, not lover of money. He must manage his own household well, which means that he must already have demonstrated those capacities.

There is a particular concern for the bishop that is not likely to come up in a corporate interview. That is the devil. Paul warns Timothy, his appointed bishop

at Ephesus, that he should make sure not to "fall into the snare of the devil." Twice avoidance of evil for bishops. I think we can imagine that the devil is most thwarted by good spiritual leadership of bishops, making it most important for them to behave well and for us to pray most earnestly for them, especially our own. No priest or deacon or lay person has his own teaching ministry. All share in the teaching authority of the bishop, who receives that authority from Christ himself.

One of the things I was most keenly aware of when I was ordained to the diaconate was that the church itself could be judged by my behaviour and my priorities. Paul wants deacons to prove blameless and hold to the mystery of our faith with a clear conscience.

Women, representing all lay people, also are to hold the virtues worthy of Christians, especially faithfulness in all things. The psalm beautifully highlights the most important qualities. "I will walk with blameless heart." What a great summary of the virtues. I will not set before my eyes anything that is base.

In one of the extra readings from today's 'office of readings', St. Augustine describes the true pastor, whether bishop, priest or deacon, who will not be among those who feed themselves and not the sheep. He will not be as happy at having his own needs met as he is when he sees the generosity of others towards each other. The Gospel, the Good News, is not to be 'sold' by its preachers to make a living from it. That would be to sell something of great value for next to nothing.

Luke

When it comes to Jesus, we don't see someone auditioning or interviewing for the position of prophet or saviour. What we see is God's own power, from where all truth and goodness and beauty come. He isn't going around looking for opportunities to strut his stuff, to show what he can do, to win a job or position. He brings to bear God's own authority and power.

If we are judging who has the qualities we can trust to be the model for our life, look to Jesus. If we are interviewing for the position of saviour of our souls, look

to Jesus. Everywhere he goes, he demonstrates that he does what no one else does, what no one else can do, what no one could even imagine being possible. He cuts through all of our ideas of what makes a person of integrity. In fact, he does meet our needs at the deepest levels where we are not even aware of our need.

What does Jesus do? Most obviously, he brings back to life what was dead. Have you ever thought that something in you, perhaps some spark of life or a dream, had died? See the many ways, even just in this short passage, that Jesus transforms death into life.

He has a large crowd with him. People want to follow him. They meet another crowd of people who are with the widow whose son has died. One crowd follows the author of life. One crowd follows a dead man on a stretcher. What does Jesus do? He joins the two crowds into one crowd of people, who return to the town celebrating life.

How does he perform this miracle? First he touches the pallet. This is a shocking gesture because it makes him ritually unclean to have contact with a dead person. But by bringing the dead to life, he overturns the very cause of defilement and impurity. He makes what is unclean into what is clean.

What is the result of his miracle? He gives the son back to his mother. In this way, Jesus reminds them and us that he is the great reconciler. Everything he does returns relationships to wholeness. He transforms what has been dead into what is life giving with simply a word - "rise!" God has, indeed, looked favourably on his people.

Call to Action

St. Robert Bellarmine is today's saintly model. He describes love as heavenly action. In this, love never gets tired of doing the right thing, of behaving in the proper manner. He was greatly loved as a pastor. It tells us that he was a leader in the Catholic Reformation of the 16th century. This was a true reformation, not a rebellion or a tearing apart of the Church. We could think of this when we see division in the Church, in the world and in families. Hold fast to what is true.