

Homily For Tuesday of the 25th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II
St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Sept 20, 2022

Memorial: St. Andrew Kim and Companions

Prov. 21:1-6,10-13 "All deeds are right in the sight of the doer, but the Lord weighs the heart."

Psalms 119:1,27-44 "Give me understanding, that I may observe your law with my whole heart."

Luke 8:19-21 "My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

Hearing and Doing

Introduction

English has half a million words. No wonder it is one of the hardest to learn as an adult. A lot of those words get in the way of good communication and so become useless. There are two ways to make any word useless. One is to give it such a narrow meaning that almost nothing is included. English has some very strange words in this category. But I want to refer to the other way to make a word useless. That is to give it such a wide meaning that it can include almost anything. I suggest that there is an effort going on in our culture to make the meaning of the word 'family' useless. What is a family? It is an important question because, in every society that has ever existed in any part of the world, the family has been the bedrock and foundation of the success of those societies. Where the family has disintegrated, so has that society. Where the definition of family has become fragmented, so has that society or culture.

That is why people of faith recognize family as something that is built into who we are as human beings created in the image of God. However, this definition is not restrictive. It is inclusive already. Children, mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins all contribute to what it means to be family. Male and female are essential elements in the definition and behaviour of family. Everywhere, we see attacks on the family. One major example is the gradual disintegration of the role of fathers and husbands and so many men are losing a sense of how they contribute to society.

Luke

This gospel passage, where Jesus addresses the idea of family, shows up in all three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, with some slight variations in the details. That tells us it is important. The members of Jesus' immediate family come to greet him. Everyone recognizes the particular familial relationship Jesus has with those and they announce their presence to Jesus, assuming he will greet them as family members.

Now, we know that Jesus is going to give new meaning to family. So our question might be whether he is going to make existing definitions of family useless. He does not. He reinforces family roles and relationships. But we have to look a little deeper to see that. What does Jesus not say. He does not say that the old definition of family is to be thrown out in favour of a new definition. He does not say you are all my buddies or my cohort or my peeps or my team. He is very specific. He uses the names of those family members: mothers, brothers and sisters. But he says that if you truly want to live out the fullness of those identities, you will be a mother who hears the word of God and obeys it. You will be a brother who listens to what God says and then do what it says. You will be a sister who is attentive to what God asks of her and then goes out and lives it.

Those who hear the word of God and do the word of God are mothers and brothers and, of course, fathers, sisters and all the rest. Jesus, the Son of God, now brings to light the fullness of the meaning of those family identities and relationships that was always present, but frequently not lived out. It begins with the specific cultural identity of family, but it builds up a new and profound and higher way of living out that identity.

I am a father and a husband and a son and a brother and a cousin. But Jesus is asking me right now to listen to him as he asks those listening to him in the flesh, to be what I already am, but with the fullness of what God intended for me. That begins with listening to the God who made family, then doing what God tells us within your family identity.

Living out our Christian faith does not mean abandoning family relationships. It means beginning with listening to Jesus, who IS that word of God made flesh, then doing what he tells us to do. What does Mary, his natural mother, say to the servants at the wedding feast in Cana and, we believe she says to us: "Do whatever he tells you." To hear Him, we must get close to Him.

Proverbs

The passage from Proverbs today gives us a number of beautiful and wise ways to listen to God and to act in accordance with what we hear. The writer says that we have to seriously evaluate what we are doing. We may think we are doing well in our own eyes, but God judges the heart. God reminds us of whether we are truly being faithful. I don't see my own selfishness and my pride because it is too close to me. That is why I need to listen to God in prayer and ask him to show me those areas so I can begin to do what is right, with God's help.

It is true that many human families are broken in some way. But Jesus opens the way to a redeemed family, where all contribute in their own unique way within the identities we have been given. Disciples form a new family, which is all inclusive of those who hear and do the word of God.

St. Andrew Kim Tae-gon

Today we remember the Korean martyrs, St. Andrew Kim Tae-gon and his many companions who were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ. Consider that he was born to a noble family, baptized into the family of God at the age of 15, after his parents converted to the Catholic faith. Andrew's father, great-grandfather, and great-uncle were martyred during persecution against Christianity.

Family members sacrifice for one another. St. Andrew did this for his personal family, his community, and then for Christianity throughout all of Korea. Today, we have an amazing faith family at St. Anne's Korean Parish in Calgary. I have met many of them and they carry on the legacy and faith and courage that their ancestor in faith, St. Andrew, established.

Call To Conversion

We have already been made brothers and sisters to Jesus through our Baptism. Today, Jesus asks us to hear the word of God and do what it tells us, to be the family we have been made for - to be mother and brother and sister to the Lord of life and to all who are called to be his disciples. Today, listen to him and him alone and ask God for the grace to do what he tells us. In this is our duty and our joy. This is the Word that does not disappoint but gives greater meaning to our lives and, through our listening and doing, to the lives of those around us.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *The blood of the holy martyrs was poured out for Christ upon the earth. Therefore, they have gained everlasting rewards.*

Collect: *O God, who made the blood of the martyrs St Andrew Kim and his companions a most fruitful seed of Christians, grant that we may be defended by their help and profit always from their example.*

Proverbs: *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he will. All deeds are right in the sight of the doer, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. Haughty eyes and a proud heart are sin. Everyone who is hasty comes only to want. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a snare of death. If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard.*

Psalm: *Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Make me understand the way of your precepts. I have chosen the way of faithfulness. I set your ordinances before me. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. I will keep your law continually forever and ever.*

Luke: *Jesus' mother and brothers could not reach him because of the crowd. He was told: Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you. But Jesus said to them: My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.*