

Homily For Tuesday of the 2nd Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Jan 18, 2022

1 Sam 16:1-13 "The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward."

Psalm 89:19-27 "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."

Mark 2:23-28 "The Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath."

A New Heart for the Sabbath

Introduction

I have found that the questions of children often point towards the greatest truths. They are so innocent of the lesser motives that we develop as we become cynical about the world. A Grade two student said that God must have been really tired after creating everything, so he took a rest on Sunday. Today's readings are going to help us understand why God rested after creation.

I think it can be very instructive for us to go back and read the first three chapters of Genesis on a regular basis. We can get a sense of the beautiful harmony and intimacy that existed in the both the vertical and the horizontal relationships, between God and humanity, and also between people. We also see how things went horribly wrong with the question from the evil one, the serpent: Did God say you aren't to eat any of the fruit from the trees in the garden? And so disharmony comes from the attempts to answer the question from a wrong motive, a heart of malice and evil intent.

Would anyone doubt that there is a terrible disharmony today? What is the cause? The answer to that question is complex, but we use terminology which might help with this understanding. One of the strict rules we have followed is with respect to keeping distant from one another. At the beginning, two terms were used interchangeably: Physical distancing and social distancing. Consider the meaning of those words. What we mean is to keep a safe distance physically. Yet, the term that is most often used now is social distancing. Check it out yourself over the next day or two. But to be social is to be in relationship. Why, then, have we used a term which means to distance our relationships when what we really

mean is to keep a safe distance physically? In the effort to be physically safe, we have been losing our sense of connection to one another. As in the garden, the harmony and intimacy are sacrificed.

Mark

Jesus' disciples were not just idly snacking on the Sabbath, the sacred day of rest. They were hungry. But they were breaking one of the 40 Sabbath laws when they should have been worshipping, visiting and praying together with family in honour of the God who gives everything. What we don't notice at first is that neither are the Pharisees doing those things. They are out following Jesus around to catch he and his disciples in a Sabbath offense. They are right that it looks bad, but their hearts are hard.

In answer to their criticism, Jesus reminds them about David, before he was king but after he was anointed by Samuel. His men were also hungry. Jesus was feeding his disciples on the Sabbath as David had done. That passage, which the Pharisees would know well, tells us that David received from the priest Abiathar, the Bread of the Presence. This was the twelve loaves that were placed each morning on the table in the sanctuary, as homage to the Lord from the twelve tribes of Israel. The loaves withdrawn to make room for the fresh ones were reserved to the priests.

It doesn't look like the same situation, but Jesus doesn't just use the example to justify them plucking grain on the Sabbath to feed their stomachs. He intensifies the example by comparing himself directly to David. David was God's anointed. He had not yet become king, but he had received a kind of sacramental action from the prophet Samuel, as directed by God.

Jesus also had been anointed at his baptism, when the Father had proclaimed from heaven, this is my beloved son. Listen to him. And the Holy Spirit had descended on him. Also, Jesus had not yet become king for all eternity. That would wait for his resurrection and Ascension into heaven.

This is no accidental comparison. Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, a messianic title, which he does 70 times in the first three Gospels. There is no

mistaking his meaning, but he intensifies it anyway by declaring that he is Lord of the Sabbath. He now makes the rules about how to honour God on that day. And how does he do that? By affirming that the Sabbath is made for man's benefit.

Vatican II uses this passage of the Gospel to underline the value of the human person: "The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way around.

1 Samuel

The new order will now affirm God's intention at creation. There should be intimacy and harmony, between God and man, but also between all people. But this will only happen if people see with the heart, as God sees our hearts.

When Samuel anointed King Saul, the people saw that he was strong and tall and gave them the appearance of strength, even while later his heart began to turn away from God. God says to Samuel, ***I will now choose*** your king as one who will be with me in his heart.

And so, in a deeply sacramental kind of moment, Samuel poured the oil over David, anointing him to be set aside, to be consecrated to serve God with his whole heart, not just with appearances. As the psalmist says today: He shall cry to me, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation!"

Call To Action

Jesus now feeds those who trust in him. Beginning with grain from the fields, he transforms that grain into his own body, by which he offers to feed all who will come to the table of his body and blood in truth and honesty and integrity of heart.

From earliest Apostolic times, the Church transferred the special day of worship to Sunday, the day of the resurrection. God established it for our good, to help us rest and devote ourselves to divine worship in joy and peace. Like everything related to God, devoting that day to him must be done from the heart, not enforced by shaming, so popular an activity today. No one will be moved to do what is right by being publicly shamed.

Of course we should honour the Lord's Day. The Pharisees were not wrong about that. Pope Benedict explains that "Sabbath intends to participate in the rest and with the peace of God. But when man refuses the 'leisure of God' (worshipping) then he becomes a 'business slave'." (Benedict XVI)

You and I must go out and be visible signs of a return of the day of rest. People must see us be different on that day, not as the observance of a rule, but as a giving of our hearts back to him who made us for harmony and intimacy.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Be my protector, O God, for you are my rock, my stronghold!*

Collect: *O God, grant that we may become a dwelling pleasing to you.*

1 Samuel: *The Lord said to Samuel, "I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons ... you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they came, Samuel looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Mortals look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, who said, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Jesse said, "The youngest is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him." The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. And the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*

Psalms: *I have set the crown on one who is mighty. I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found my servant David. With my holy oil I have anointed him. He shall cry to me, "You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation!" I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*

Mark: *One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said, "Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And Jesus said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat. Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath."*