

Homily for July 28th
Thursday of the 17th Week of Ordinary Time

In the passage from Jeremiah there is a vivid image where the Prophet sees a potter working with a piece of clay and hears the Lord say:

Just like the clay in the potters hand, so are you in my hands O house of Israel

This is reminiscent of Genesis two where we read:

then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground,

We are made in the image of God and throughout our lives God is at work reshaping us so that at the end we will be that perfect creation, holy and righteous without any defect or sin. Such is what it means for us to become Saints.

Each day of our lives we are to come to God to be shaped and reshaped because God isn't finished with any of us yet. I would like to suggest we can come to God in three different ways, as: Silly Putty, Play-Doh or Potter's Clay.

I. Silly Putty

We can come to God as Silly Putty. And you'd think that was a good thing. And it is, sort of. You see, Silly Putty is pliable, exactly what God wants with our lives. It can be shaped into ball so when troubles come we can bounce back. And when applied to the written word or the comics it will make an exact copy of what's there. And that would be a good thing, especially for Bible Study.

Unfortunately, Silly Putty is too pliable. And it's too stretchable. Once you've picked up the picture or the words, they almost stretch out of shape before you've gotten them off the paper. And while Silly Putty is very pliable, it doesn't hold its shape. You can make a vase or a pot and let it sit for awhile and before long, it's just a blob.

There are folks like that. Their faith and lives get shaped at Mass and they feel like they can bounce back from anything the world throws at them. They even pick up both the Scripture and the message and carry an imprint of them on their heart.

But then they get to the office or with friends and they start picking up the imprint of other ideas and pretty soon you can't even see the scripture anymore. And they are so pliable, that the least little nudge and they're out of shape. And pretty soon, they're just a little blob again.

II. Play-Doh

And what do we make of Play-Doh Christians? Well, just like Silly Putty, some of us are like Play-Doh. Play-Doh is pliable and shapeable. It doesn't bounce, it just kind makes a thud and splat when it hits. And it doesn't transfer images or words like Silly Putty. But it does keep its shape.

You can make almost anything out of Play-Doh. All you have to do is let your imagination go wild. The only problem with Play-Doh is that it's not made for creating permanent objects. "Play-doh is designed to be used over and over again. If allowed to harden (to preserve a creation) it will most likely crack." That's right from their website.

So, if you make a pitcher or a cup or even a vase out Play-Doh and it cracks, that means it won't hold water. The same thing is true for some Christians. Their life and faith has been molded by God but they offered up the wrong substance. They only came into it half-heartedly. They sort of Play the part but they don't really live the part. As a consequence, pretty soon their faith and their lives dry out and they begin to crack. And before long, their faith no longer holds water.

III. Potter's Clay

Then there is Potter's Clay which is both pliable and shapeable. It needs moisture to for the molding process. It doesn't bounce but in its pliable state it doesn't break either. And unlike Silly Putty it holds its shape. And unlike Play-doh, it not only holds its shape but it doesn't crack when it dries. You can preserve your creation.

As you can see, Potter's Clay Christians are those who come and give themselves completely into God's hands. They are like Potter's Clay. They put their lives into the Potter's hands and let God mold them and make them into a useful vessel for God's service.

They are pliable and shapeable. The Sacramental life of the Church provides the moisture we need so as to continually be pliable in the potter's hand and keeps them moist enough to be worked by the gentleness, care and expertise of the Potter's Hand. Potter's Clay may not bounce but that's OK because the Potter is a very careful artisan who protects the clay as He is shaping and molding.

And Potter's Clay keeps its shape. Not only does it keep its shape but can be painted upon and decorated by the Creator to become a beautiful work of art or left plain and ordinary. But in either case, whether beautiful or ordinary, exquisite or functional, it's God who chooses and both can be useful tools.

And, whereas, heat breaks down the properties of both Silly Putty and Play-Doh, heat is needed to complete the process of the creation of pottery. Clay pots, vases, cups etc have to be fired and hardened so they can become useful.

And in a sense, so do we. Sometimes we think the trials and tribulations of life are there to break us. Maybe they are there to "bake us" and fire us into the useful tool which God has chose us to be.

Conclusion

I realize that all analogies eventually break if pushed too far, the same thing can be said here. But you get the point. How we give ourselves to God determines the kind of medium God has to mold. We can be Silly Putty, Play-Doh or Potter's Clay in God's Hand.

God want's us to be Potter's Clay in his hands. Oh, God can still shape us and form us if we're Silly Putty or Play-Doh. But what God really needs is for us to give ourselves to Him completely through Christ who died on the cross for our sakes. He's our example of giving our complete selves.

We're challenged and called to become Potter's Clay and put our lives in his hands.