

Homily 24th Sunday

"THE LORD GOD OPENS MY EAR THAT I MAY HEAR" - FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH, OUR FIRST READING.

"SO ALSO FAITH OF ITSELF, IF IT DOES NOT HAVE WORKS, IS DEAD" - OUR SECOND READING FROM SAINT JAMES

AND FINALLY, FROM OUR GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK; "WHOEVER WISHES TO COME AFTER ME MUST DENY HIMSELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME."

THREE DIFFERENT SCRIPTURES.....THREE DIFFERENT AUTHORS....BUT ALL DIVINELY INSPIRED BY THE ONE TRUE GOD

AND THE AMAZING THING ABOUT ALL OF THEM.....IS THEY WERE ALL WRITTEN SEPERATELY....AND SO LONG AGO.....YET THEY ALL SPEAK TO US....TODAY....

ABOUT OUR FAITH..... HOW WE PRACTICE THAT FAITH.....ABOUT OUR SALVATION

TAKE THE FIRST READING...."GOD OPENS MY EAR THAT I MAY HEAR"....YOU MAY REMEMEBER THAT FATHER KEITH ADDRESSED THIS LAST WEEK.....GOD DOES OPEN OUR EARS....WE CAN HEAR.....BUT THROUGH "FREE WILL" WE STILL HAVE THE OPTION OF WHETHER TO LISTEN OR NOT....ITS CALLED SELECTIVE LISTENING.....AND NONE OF US ARE IMMUNE TO IT.....MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN SOMETIMES DO THIS.

WIVES ACCUSE HUSBANDS OF IT ALL THE TIME.....ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY ASK US TO CLEAN OUT THE GUTTERS.....WEED THE FLOWER BEDS OR DO SOME OTHER EQUALLY PRODUCTIVE TASK WHEN THE SAINTS OR LSU OR PLAYING FOOTBALL ON TV.....

HUSBANDS SOMETIMES ACCUSE WIVES OF THIS.....ESPECIALLY WHEN WE ASK THEM TO GET THE OIL CHANGED IN THE CAR ON THE WAY HOME OR DO SOME OTHER EQUALLY PRODUCTIVE TASK WHEN THEY WOULD RATHER SHOP FOR A PAIR OF SHOES THEY REALLY NEED INSTEAD.

AND KIDS.....DOESN'T THE SAME PRINCIPAL APPLY WHEN MOM OR DAD TELL YOU TO MAKE UP YOUR BED....EMPTY THE TRASH.....OR DO YOUR HOMEWORK..... RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR VIDEO GAME....OR IN THE MIDDLE OF A VERY IMPORTANT PHONE CALL WITH OUR BEST FRIEND.

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WE CAN ALL CALL IT SELECTIVE LISTENING, BUT IN MOST CASES..... WE SIMPLY CHOOSE NOT TO LISTEN....OR BECAUSE IT DOESN'T RANK HIGHLY ENOUGH ON OUR OWN PRIORITY LIST.....IT'S LESS IMPORTANT TO US THAN WHAT **WE** WANT TO DO.....WE CHOOSE TO FORGET.....ANOTHER WAY TO PUT IT IS: "WE HEAR WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR"!

DOES THIS APPLY TO WHAT WE HEAR IN MASS.....ARE WE LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD..... SURE....IT HAPPENS HERE....BUT LET'S SEE HOW THAT TIES IN WITH OUR OTHER SCRIPTURESJUST IN CASE YOU'RE LISTENING.....

ST. JAMES TELLS US IN OUR SECOND READING, "THAT FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD"IF WE COME TO MASS AND HEAR THIS.....AND CHOOSE NOT TO RESPOND AS JESUS WOULD CALL US TO RESPOND.....WE WOULD BE DOING WHAT MOST HUMAN BEINGS DO.....

IT'S A SAFE BET, THAT.....80% OF ALL COLLECTIONS HERE AT JGS.....USED FOR OUR MISSION IN DOING GOD'S WORK.....HERE IN OUR PARISH AND OUR CITY..... ARE CONTRIBUTED BY ONLY 20% OF THE PEOPLE IN OUR PARISH.....80% OF THE WORKS OF MERCY AND CHARITY IN OUR PARISH ARE DONE BY 20% OR LESS OF THOSE REGISTERED HERE.....

NOW DON'T GET ME WRONG.....I'M NOT BEING CRITICAL....I'M JUST STATING THE FACTS.

BUT WHEN WE CONSIDER OUR GOSPEL FOR TODAY.....I HOPE THESE FACTS CAUSE US TO LISTEN MORE CLOSELY AND MOVE GOD'S WORK UP A NOTCH OR TWO ON OUR PRIORITY LIST....

JESUS TELLS THE CROWD AND HIS DISCIPLES IN OUR GOSPEL OF MARK....."WHOEVER WISHES TO COME AFTER ME MUST DENY HIMSELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME."

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DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR.....

“WHOEVER WISHES TO COME AFTER ME.....COME TO HEAVEN....WHERE I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU.....WHOEVER WISHES TO COME AFTER ME.....MUST DENY HIMSELF.....LOVE HIS NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF.....FEED THE POOR....CLOTHE THE NAKED, VISIT THE SICK.....MUST DENY HIMSELF.... CHANGE HIS PRIORITIES.....TO PUT GOD FIRST.....WHICH MEANS PUTTING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS ABOVE THEIR OWN.....AS YOU HAVE DONE FOR THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS.....YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME..... WHOEVER WISHES TO COME AFTER ME MUST “TAKE UP HIS CROSS”UNSELFISHLY GIVE OF YOUR SELF, YOUR TIME....YOUR TALENT....YOUR TREASURE.....EXPECTING NOTHING IN RETURN.....EXCEPT WHAT JESUS PROMISED.....A PLACE WITH HIM IN HIS FATHERS HOUSE WHEN THIS LIFE IS DONE.

THIS.... IS WHAT WE’RE MEANT TO HEAR....IF WE CHOOSE TO LISTEN!

THIS LIFE HERE ON EARTH IS SHORT.....IT’S THIS LONG (HOLING UP HANDS)

AND HOW LONG IS THE ETERNITY THAT JESUS PROMISES....

THINK OF THE CLEAREST NIGHT YOU CAN IMAGINE.....THE FARTHEST STAR YOU CAN SEE.....

NOW MULTIPLY THAT BY INFINITY.....IT’S FOREVER! THAT’S GOD’S PROMISE

AND ALL HE’S ASKING OF US.....IS DURING THIS TIME (HOLDING UP HANDS AGAIN)

DURING THIS SHORT LIFE WE HAVE ON EARTH.....THAT WE SHARE OUR BLESSINGS WITH

OTHERS.....THAT WE SHARE OUR WEALTH....OUR TIME....OUR TALENT..... IN DOING HIS WILL! IT’S NOT MUCH TO ASK.

THIS PAST WEEKEND....LABOR DAY WEEKEND.....MY FAMILIY SPENT THE ENTIRE WEEKEND BEGINNNING

FRIDAY AFTERNOON.....IN THE ICU....INTESIVE CARE UNIT..... WITH MY MOTHER IN LAW...MY WIFES MOM....HANGING BY A THREAD TO LIFE.....

ON MONDAY AFTERNOON.....OUR PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED AND MEMAW, AS WE CALL HER, WAS MOVED TO A PRIVATE ROOM IN THE HOSPITAL.....

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LATE MONDAY AFTERNOON AFTER FOUR DAYS OF STRESS, LITTLE SLEEP AND ANXIETY I SENT MY COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED WIFE HOME AND I TOOK THE LAST SHIFT BEFORE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL. AS I SAT THERE READING THE SCRIPTURES AND RELATED MATERIAL IN PREPARATION FOR THIS HOMILY.....MEMAW DOZED AND WATCHED TELEVISION.....

SHE ASKED WHERE HER DAUGHTER JOANN WAS.....I SAID SHE WASN'T FEELING WELL AND SHE WENT HOME.....SHE SAID.....SHE DOES SO MUCH FOR ME.....SO MUCH AT HER JOB.....AND SO MUCH FOR THE CHURCH.....THEN SHE LOOKED RIGHT AT ME/AND LIKE SHE KNEW WHAT I WAS READING....LIKE SHE KNEW THE HOMILY THAT WAS ALREADY FORMING IN MY MIND....AND SAID.

YOU KNOW....IF EVERYONE THAT CAN WORK AT THE CHURCH.....WOULD WORK AT THE CHURCH...SHE WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TO REST.....I JUST STARED AT HER IN DISBELIEF.....SHE REPEATED.....

YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.....IF EVERYONE THAT COULD WORK FOR THOSE IN NEED....WOULD DO THEIR PART.....IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR EVERYONE.....I JUST STARED AT HER.....AND SAID.

YES.....YOU ARE RIGHT MEMAW.....

THEN SHE SAID.....WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO FUSS.....BUT THAT'S ALL I'M GOING TO SAY ABOUT THAT.....BECAUSE YOU KNOW..... JESUS KNOWS..... HE KNOWS!

AND HE DOES KNOW....I BELIEVE THAT....AND I ALSO BELIEVE.....WITH ALL MY HEART....THAT HE WAS USING MY 93 YEAR OLD MOTHER-IN-LAW TO TELL ME.... THAT HE KNOWS.....AND....TO INSPIRE ME TO BRING YOU A MESSAGE.

.THIS MESSAGE....."TO OPEN OUR EARS AND HEAR "

TO PUT OUR FAITH INTO ACTION....AS JESUS TAUGHT US.....TO PICK UP OUR CROSS.....TO DENY OURSELVES..... AT LEAST TO SOME EXTENT..... BY GIVING OF OUR TIME.....OUR TALENT AND OUR TREASURE.....IN SUPPORT OF HIS CHURCH AND THOSE IT SERVES....THOSE WHO NEED OUR HELP SO DESPERATELY.

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FOLLOWING OUR 11AM MASS (THIS MASS) THERE WILL BE A POTLUCK DINNER IN THE GYM AND ALL ARE INVITED....BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY.....A MINISTRY FAIR....WHERE EACH OF THE MINISTRIES HERE AT GOOD SHEPHERD WILL HAVE A TABLE AND SOMEONE THAT CAN TELL YOU ABOUT WHAT THAT MINISTRY DOES HERE IN OUR PARISH.....WE NEED HELP IN EVERY ONE OF THEM..... NOW, YOU CAN DO ONE OF THREE THINGS.....NOT GO....SCURRY BACK HOME AND WATCH THE SAINTS GAME.....GO EAT AND THEN SCURRY BACK HOME AND WATCH THE SAINTS GAME.....OR IF YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TODAY TO WHAT JESUS WOULD WANT YOU TO DO.....YOU CAN ENJOY THE MEAL....ENJOY THE COMMUNITY AND FELLOWSHIP..... AND CHOOSE A MINISTRY THAT FITS YOUR INTEREST OR YOUR TALENT AND SIGN UP TO HELP.

OH, AND INCIDENTLY.....MEMAW MOVED BACK HOME.....TO HER NURSING HOME IN RUSTON WEDNESDAY.....SHE COULD USE YOUR PRAYERS.....BUT THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT ETERNITY IS IN HER FUTURE.....JESUS KNOWS.