

Homily Ideas for Sunday April 30, 2006

The Third Sunday after Easter

Day before the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker

From the reading from the Acts: "...Jesus whom you handed over and denied....You denied the Holy and Righteous One..."

From the Psalm: "...May we see better times! Lord, show us the light of your face!"

From the reading from 1 John: "Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not keep his commandments is a liar..."

From the reading from St. Luke: "Thus it is written that...repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations..."

- ❖ Today, April 30th, is celebrated in the Church as the Third Sunday after Easter. It is one day before the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. So, let's look at today's readings for ideas for us, a people who work. By work I mean all the productive activities we undertaken whether or not we are paid in money—typing, cleaning house, framing a house, changing diapers, administering a contract, comforting a child, repairing broken plumbing, representing a client, etc.
- ❖ Our being here on Sunday, participating in our communal worship, the celebration of the Eucharist, is a way of saying, "I know him; I know Jesus." The caution from reading from St. John's epistle can be seen as taking us to the rest of the week, to our work week, so to speak. Do we keep his commandments?
- ❖ In not keeping Jesus' commandments at work and at home, in the word of the author of the Acts, we deny the Holy and Righteous one; we define ourselves as liars in the eyes of St. John. We profess belief on Sunday and live as not believing on Monday.
- ❖ I think the readings from the 4th Psalm and St. Luke's gospel take us beyond just avoiding conflict between Sunday's profession of belief and Monday's actions. The psalmist asks the Lord to show the light of his face and St. Luke writes repentance for sin would be preached to all nations. How does God's face get shown in our workplaces if we do not show it in the way we conduct

ourselves at work? How does repentance for sin get preached in our part of the world if we do not show it in the way we conduct ourselves at home and at work?

- ❖ It is in our actions during our work week, our Monday through Saturday, that we express the reality and depth of our beliefs. That expression becomes the face of God, our preaching of the gospel, in our part of the world. The non-verbal expression of our actions preaches louder than words ever could. We humans tend to hear what is said and believe what is done.
- ❖ How do we do this? How do we put our faith into our work? How do we preach the gospel without words? Some ideas are offered in an excellent little book titled, “Spirituality at Work: 10 Ways to Balance Your Life on the Job” by Greg Pierce.
 - Seek to build a sense of caring and respect at work: As we interact with our co-workers, choose the words and actions that show care and respect. Initiate it rather than waiting for the “boss” to do it.
 - In line with the prayer of the Our Father, we forgive our own imperfections and those of others (“Forgive us our trespasses [our imperfections] as we forgive those of others”). I’m not advocating accepting imperfect work so much as a change in attitude from fixing the blame to fixing the problem.
 - Perform the highest quality work of which we are capable. The work we perform, paid and unpaid, is our way of participating in God’s creation. It is our gift to others.
 - Whom do you least like to work with, of all the people with whom you work? Recall your last interaction or two. How well did that interaction demonstrate your faith and acceptance of Christ’s message? What did the face of God look like to that person? What should it have looked like?
 - Story of a personal experience (substitute your own story and place in your homily where you think it would have the most impact.)

I remember one colleague of mine who was avoided by nearly all in the office. He had a perpetual scowl on his face and a curt reply for any comment made to him. He did his work well but was not a pleasure to be around. I and others tended to avoid him; and if forced to interact, to return his scowls with scowls and his curt comments with equally curt and even cutting comments.

This bothered me; I did not see my behavior as what I wanted. So one week I decided I wasn't going to let him control my behavior any more. I began giving him a smiling greeting every day on arrival and on leaving for the day. After a couple of weeks, I paused a couple of times a week to mention something he was doing well and/or to thank him for doing something well.

It took nearly ten weeks but he began to return the smiling greeting with a gracious greeting. We began to talk on occasion. I learned that he was a very sensitive man who had been hurt deeply many times. I think he had become curt and gruff to keep from being hurt more. By the time our work paths separated his shell was opening. We talked about our families and about our work with friendliness and mutual concern. Quite a difference from our start.

- ❖ As we leave here today and entered into the larger part of our lives, we should recognize that our level of belief, our level of commitment to Christ, is measured by what we do out there, not by the words we say in here. In a sense, our faith is measured by how we treat our least preferred co-worker. How will you improve that treatment tomorrow?

Submitted by Louis Trenta