



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Mike Kuse
November 5, 2017 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I Malachi 1:14, 2:2, 8-10

Psalm 131:1-3

Reading II 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13

Gospel Matthew 23:1-12

Homily

You practice what you preach. When you preach do it with actions, and not with words. Jesus cuts right through everything, and he is challenging us and saying, “You know, when you are baptized — and Josephine is going to be baptized in a few minutes — we are given that gift to preach. Some of the most powerful preaching is done by example.”

Probably if you had a camera on you since you were born, you would be amazed at how you preached the Gospel by serving others and being present for someone. We all have lots of words and we can ramble on forever. But it takes is one gesture that makes all the difference in the world. So, lets think about that for a moment in our discipleship and stewardship that we talk about all the time. One of the qualities is that we are to serve each other. Each of us can raise our hand and say, “Well, I do that.” Jesus would ask, “Do you do it enough? And not only that, when you serve, how do you serve? Do you serve to get an honor, to get noticed? Or do you do it just because something inside of you is saying, ‘I need to do that.’ ”

For those of you who are parents, have you ever had the experience of going to a public place and losing your child? Where did he or she go? — and you go into a panic. Then all of a sudden you find out that the child wandered off but someone stepped right in and helped your child, and held the child until you were notified. That is serving. You would say, “Thank you.” And the person would answer, “You don’t owe me anything. Anybody would do this for a child that is lost.”

We see it in the military where men and women serve and they are protecting our lives. They do it because it is an honor for them. They really don’t expect a thank you, all they want to do is please and imitate what we are doing on the front ground of battle. Sometimes we see someone who is being bullied. It is happening all the time in our schools and any place you want to go. Adults do it too. But children have a way, at a certain age, of making fun of one another. One thing to do is to walk up to that child and say, “You really shouldn’t do that.” And if he or she smarts off to you, say, “I forgive you. But what you are doing right now is wrong.” So it comes back to that gift of just opening our lives.

Here in our community we see many people serving and preaching without any words. Our Ladies of Charity have two centers, and if you go there you will realize how many hours they put in reaching out to someone in need. They receive no pay. And sometimes there is no thank you. They say, "This is what we are called to do. This is what Jesus is asking of us." So when we realize ourselves, and we all have to take notice of this — priests, and deacons and bishops especially — when we preach at Eucharist, that is just a fraction of what we do. The important thing is that if I ask you to do something and you see me doing the opposite, it is like, "OK. He didn't really mean what he was saying. He did the opposite." So we all have to look in the mirror at times and say, "Did I do something for someone simply because it was the thing to do? Or did my action lead me to do what I needed to do for someone else?"

Think about a person who has spoken to you through actions, not words, and how that has affected your life, and how it changed you to look and see what is going on within yourself? And maybe deep down you are saying, "I need to imitate that person."

I did a funeral this afternoon. It was a funeral of a young man, and his life was about preaching without words. He smiled a lot, he was spontaneous, he loved to sing, he loved the theater — he just loved life. A young friend of his got up and gave a testimony and shared that this young man was a friend who treated him like a brother. "You could talk to him about anything," he said. "He would call you up and ask how you were doing. His whole life was about everybody else but himself." The actions of this young man who just died said to all of us, "My life was not just about me."

Those are the people Jesus is talking about. He is really challenging us. He says, "Don't get up tight with yourself and think you are the greatest. Just let your love flow to others through your gestures, your kindness, and your charity." Then Jesus will say, "You got the message." That is why you and I have to come back here Sunday after Sunday. We need to listen to the Scriptures. We need to be excited and think, "Maybe I can do something this week that I have been putting aside — and help someone else."

So may we go home tonight remembering: Practice what you preach in front of your children and your grandchildren. I try and do this personally for everyone I serve. It is not about the words, "This is what you should do." It is about, "Let me show you how to do it." And when we do that, we find the peace within ourselves.

As the church draws us to the final weeks of the Liturgical Year, you and I are becoming more and more in tune to say, "Yes, I can preach. But my preaching is going to be about serving someone else." May we do it generously, may we do it with a smile, and if no one says thank you, may you and I just turn to God and say, "Thanks, God, for putting me in this situation to show someone else that you are our God, that you are the God of all people, and the God who teaches us to serve."

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