

February 12, 2023

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5 verses 20-22,27-28,33-34,37

(Longer form verses 17-37)

Homily given by Deacon Tony

Upon first listening to this Gospel, it appears as if Jesus is scolding us, and quite severely too, and this is the shorter version. The longer version is much of the same. So, is this the interpretation we are to take away from today's Gospel? Is this what I'm supposed to preach on? If so, then so be it but right out of the gate let's be clear about something; Jesus does not scold us. He chastises us in what is called AGAPE. (Pronounced a ga pay) The highest form of love. That unconditional love and charity God has for us when he corrects us. So, as I pondered upon this Gospel it was then the words of Monsignor Champlin entered into my head. Monsignor said that each Gospel is like a prism and each time you turn it, it reveals something new necessary for our salvation. And because we know that scripture is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and reveals something new each time we read it-I turned the prism. And what was revealed is that there is an invisible thread that runs from this Gospel to last week's Gospel to the Gospel the week before that.

Two weeks ago, the Gospel was the Beatitudes. Where we are instructed by Jesus on how to live our lives and it deserves a reread.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

Last weeks Gospel Jesus talks about being like the salt of the earth. For when salt loses its ability to flavor it is rendered useless. And then he goes on to say that you are a light that should never be placed beneath a bushel basket.

And now the invisible thread leads us to today's Gospel and to better explain the connection I'm going to take you back to 1980. No this is not a nostalgia tour; it is the year I enrolled in MVCC to become a forest ranger. Imagine that forest ranger to prison guard. Ah but I digress. One thing I remember about my short academic career was that one day I found myself in the library. I have no idea why I was there but what I do remember was I found myself in one of those cubicles with the headphones on listening to a cassette tape of Doctor Leo Buscaglia. Remember I have no idea why I was in the library let alone listening to this tape but what Dr. Buscaglia spoke about was the value of positive human touch. Now didn't we just hear that message a few weeks ago from Father Tom. The value of positive human touch, and the Doctor went on to say, especially thru hugging. This Catholic man in that instant changed my life forever. Forty years, FORTY YEARS later I've never forgotten what he said. The value of positive human touch.

We know it to be AGAPE through Jesus' teaching. But we also know through Jesus that it is more than just a physical embrace. It also is a spiritual embrace of another as well as an emotional embrace of another.

The invisible thread that runs through all three Gospels reaches its fulfillment here in the last Gospel with this very simple message. That we need to work on becoming Positive Catholic Role Models. It is all right before our eyes.

Two weeks ago Jesus instructs us on how we are to conduct our lives. Last week he says we must never be static but ecstatic for Christ in bringing his message out into the world. That we must be the light of Christ in the world. And this week he tells us our word must be our bond and our actions must reflect that.

Then and only then will our righteousness surpass that of the scribes and pharisees.

Jesus said the Harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few. Let us work on amending our lives so we can change the lives of others in the spirit of AGAPE by becoming POSITIVE CATHOLIC ROLE MODELS! AMEN