

# 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2019 – Homily

## ***Our Chaotic Culture and Humility***

### ***Introduction***

Last week at this time I was at the beach. It is a place where I try to spend time away from the noise of the world. It is a time to pray and to reflect. I remove myself from TV and social media, with the exception of watching the Phillies and Eagles; but clearly they need a lot of our prayers so they fit in with the intention of the week. It is a time to read a good book or two... something that elevates my spirit and touches my soul.

Unfortunately, the tragedies in El Paso and Dayton occurred shortly after we had arrived and were settled in. Those incidents saturated every media outlet and they became a major distraction for me. I was captivated by the various points of view that were offered as solutions to the problems that face our nation. Everyone had a point-of-view and a solution for these problems. I found myself wondering about faith, and where God was in all of this tragedy and chaos.

### ***Scripture Themes - Faith and Trust***

Our readings for Sunday August 11th focus on faith. And as I reflected on the story of Abraham, I wondered if he too had moments where he wondered where God was? We see Abraham and Sarah, an elderly couple, childless, and living in a foreign land wandering and wondering about God's presence. They were given a promise and they waited. And in the waiting they had to wonder... was the promise real?

Hebrews assures us that our trust in God is well-founded. We are reminded that like Abraham we know whom to trust.

Faith involves trust in God's Word even when it cannot be verified by our human senses and reasoning. The virtue of hope springs from the faith that everything is a part of God's plan. I had to wonder how the things our nation is experiencing are a part of that plan.

### ***Summer Reading - "He Leadeth Me" (Fr. Walter J. Ciszek)***

I found myself challenged by this question during my prayers and reflections. It was then that I stumbled upon an insight I would like to share with you. I was reading

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2019 – Homily

the book... “He Leadeth me” by Fr. Walter Ciszek. This was a book recommended to me by my spiritual director. Fr. Ciszek was a Jesuit priest from Shenandoah PA who is buried in Wernersville at the Jesuit Center. His cause for sainthood is progressing in the Diocese of Allentown, and on a visit to his grave one will notice the mementos and keepsakes that others have left behind. These items represent the prayers of people asking for the favor of a miracle for some hopeless or difficult cause.

Fr. Ciszek was a man who endured the threat of death by firing squad on several occasions. He also witnessed others being senselessly slaughtered and brutally tortured in the Siberian work camps. He felt himself a failure in God’s eyes; yet through all of this his faith grew stronger.

### ***The Role of Humility***

there is a chapter in the book where Fr. Ciszek reflects on humility. I found this reflection incredibly insightful in regards to the problems we face today. Fr. Ciszek describes his struggles with his own failings in regards to humility. Reflecting on the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane he offers this insight... “We tend to think of this moment in the garden as an act of obedience, but it is in fact the most perfect illustration of the virtue of humility.” He painfully notes that, “following the will of the Father is not always an easy task.” He knows this from his own struggles and failings. Fr. Ciszek points out that humility is based on a simple recognition of a very fundamental truth; the true relationship between God and man. Humility is nothing more or less than knowing our place before God.

It dawned on me that this is where we are... as a nation, as a culture, and as a church. We have it all wrong. We have the virtue of humility, and in losing this virtue of true humility, we have also lost the ability to see our burdens and our problems in relationship to God and ourselves.

### ***A Thought***

It was this insight that helped me to put the problems we are facing in perspective. It occurred to me, as it should occur to all of us that our nation’s problems are considerable. Because they are considerable, they are not easy to fix. Focusing the blame on things such as broken families, too many guns, too few laws, mental illness, insensitive language, politicians, and drugs and alcohol does not get us to the truth. I want to be clear here, I do not deny that these are all very real problems.

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2019 – Homily

The truth is that our problems are much larger than the partial list of symptoms I just identified above. They are larger however, because of the hardness of our hearts; we think we know better than God. We have lost our sense of humility and we have rejected the reality of our place before God. To verify this truth, listen to the news or spend some time on any social media site; we have ALL become experts.

### ***God is the Director of this Play***

I think Fulton Sheen perfectly describes our cultural problems and our relationship to God in the following analogy...

“The only time some men think about God is when they want to find someone to blame for their own sins. Without ever saying so, they assume that man is responsible for everything good and beautiful in the world, but God is responsible for its wickedness and its wars.... They ignore the fact that God is like a playwright who wrote a beautiful drama, gave it to men to act with all the directions for acting, and then made a botch of it.”

We have forgotten that God is the director of this play. All of the events of our life... all man’s interferences, wickedness and misdeeds are used by God to reach us... to wake us up... to remind us that we need to look to and lean on HIM.

### ***Grace***

We need the grace to realize our position before God; not only in times when things are going well, but also in times of disappointment, confusion and chaos. We need grace especially now, in times like these.

God’s Grace will help us to realize the true depth of the problems we face. In that realization we should be driven to our knees, silencing our mouths and opening our hearts.

That grace is only offered in one place; at the altar of sacrifice on the cross. It is a place where we are reminded of our smallness in relation to God’s greatness, goodness and love.

Think of this... We believe in a God who can take the simplest, most insignificant material like wheat or a grape and turn it into sacred food to feed us. He feeds us to

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time 2019 – Homily

make us more like HIM... to sanctify us and make us holy. If God can do that imagine what, He can do for the world if we get out of His way and follow His will.

### ***Conclusion***

Abraham and Sarah trusted God because they realized who they were and their place before God. They knew they were small in relation to His goodness. This is the attitude Christ wanted us to embrace. As he went to the cross, Christ became small, becoming a man so that he could show us how to live, how to give and how to love.

God is speaking to us in the events of our world, our nation, our culture and our Church... He is trying to reach us. Are we listening? Do we realize how small we are in comparison to what we face? How big he is? How much He loves us and wants what is best for us?

And so we offer this prayer... Not my will Lord, not my thoughts Lord, and not my words Lord, but your will be done.