

Homily

16th Sunday in OT

July 21, 2019

A community of mice gathered and lived in a farmhouse in the country. They lived a peaceful and prosperous life, what with the farmer and his wife providing plentiful crumbs throughout their home. They seemed to haven't a worry in the world.

Then one day, they lost three of their number to a cat. And the next day they lost five more. A terrible fear ran through their community. They assembled together to discuss their dilemma. After recognizing the threat, the cat, they decided they needed to do something to alert themselves when the cat was threatening. They decided they needed to attach a bell to the cat so they could hear of the impending doom. Yes, they all agreed, this was a good idea.

Then an old wise mouse of their community said in a loud and commanding voice, "Yes, attach a bell to the cat, a good idea; but who will do the attaching?"

With that said, the community of mice dispersed, in silence, laden with fear and regret; attaching the bell was much easier said than done.

Today, Luke shares with us the story of Martha, burdened with much serving. Another translation suggests Martha was distracted with many tasks. Has that ever happened to you? Have you been distracted from what was important by other things?

That is what Jesus was telling Martha. Here we have Jesus, with Mary at his feet and Martha anxious and worried about other things.

As I am writing this homily, I look around at my desk and think of all the other tasks that need to be done, could be done now, should have been done long ago, but right now needs be left for another time.

But what Jesus is talking about is more than improved time management, not that we all couldn't be a little better in that area. No, Jesus is talking about community, communion with one another.

I once shared with a friend a long time ago that the bible could be summed up in one word, LOVE. That has always stuck with me. Not only because I know that wasn't me who thought of that, but a higher power working within me. But also because it led me to consider just how the bible is a love story; every passage is a love letter from God to us. From salvation history to Calgary, the bible is full of story after story, lesson after lesson, parable after parable of some demonstration of love.

Then someone much wiser than me suggested a deeper and wider description of the love that is expressed so lovingly in the bible; Deep Genuine Communion. That is what God wants for us. That is what God gives us.

I was recently asked what my favorite bible verse was. That's like asking me my favorite food – I like them all. Or my favorite movie – there are many I call my favorite. But to settle on one, I told him, "Love one another as I have loved you." It's a directive, a statement of how we can expect others to know we are His disciples.

Okay; I love you. I love you. I love you.

There, I've done it. I did as Jesus said I should.

Or did I?

To love one another as I have loved you.

Oh, I'm supposed to love you as Jesus loves me.

Oh, that's easier said than done.

How do I attach that bell to the cat? How do I love you as Jesus loves me?

First, we look at what Jesus did. First, He prayed to His Father. We often find Jesus retreating to a deserted area to pray. That's a good start; we pray to the Father. That's what we are doing right now. The Mass is the greatest liturgical prayer. Let's participate fully so we can get the most out of this experience. Let us listen to the Word of God and let it penetrate our hearts. Let us receive Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity; let him enter us substantially and become one with us intimately. We also have the Liturgy of the Hours, the second greatest liturgical prayer. We have private and communal prayers; the rosary and the divine chaplet. We have sacramentals; these are devotionals we can partake of throughout the day and week, such as the scapular, prayers to saints as we venerate their relics and our baptismal blessing with Holy Water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

But don't let these be the end-all of what Christ means for us. We are made to be communal creatures; we are the Body of Christ. We are meant to be together. That's why Jesus tells us that the good we did for the least of our brothers, we did for Him. Now, we can't be all things for all people, but God did give us gifts that we were meant to develop and share. We are called to be what we are meant to be; priests and deacons, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and also teachers, factory workers, engineers, accountants, police, military. But not just our profession; we have gifts of time, talent and treasure. There are many things we can do.

And we are meant to take these gifts and share them with one another. We are meant to be in communion with each other; deep, genuine communion.

When we share the sign of peace, it is a simple gesture, but it means so much. It means we are many parts, but one body.

We must struggle through the inevitable conflicts that happen between friends; my best friend and I don't always agree and we sometimes argue, but we struggle through and remain friends. We must struggle through the inevitable conflicts that happen between neighbors and coworkers; we may never agree, but we are called to continue to work and live together in harmony.

If we remember the basic premise, that God loves us no matter what, and we are called to do the same, to love each other no matter what, then at least we know where we are going, even if it isn't easy.

There is so much conflict in the world today, as there was yesterday and as there will be tomorrow. So what are you going to do to make the world a better place? What am I going to do to make the world a better place?

Remember that the evil one is alive and active in the world. Remember those distractions? I would suggest that the devil is the most common offender of placing those distractions in our lives. What distractions prevent you from loving your neighbor or your enemy. What distractions prevent me?

To successfully put that bell on that cat, we have to make a plan and execute that plan with faith and confidence. To successfully love each other as Jesus loves us, we have to plan and then execute that plan. Pray for love to be the most important focus in our lives. Work hard to make the gifts God has given us a true blessing to all those around us. Apply those gifts freely and lovingly. Let no distractions prevent us from deep genuine communion with one another, just as Jesus does for us.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part

and it will not be taken from her."