

Homily

23rd Sunday in OT

September 6, 2020

Show of hands: who made New Year's Resolutions for 2020? Keep your hands up if you remember what they were. Finally, keep your hands up if you kept any.

I believe resolutions are good. We've all heard that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Actually, I believe it begins with the desire, an intention to make the journey. Without the intention, the first step is never made.

And even more important than the intention is the value of the intention – is our intention for good or for something less than good.

For example, The Act of Contrition offers us the opportunity to say we are sorry to God, first because we are afraid of the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. This is called imperfect contrition. We are afraid of an outcome that is negative to ourselves. There is a selfish element to our sorrow.

Perfect contrition, on the other hand, is when we are sorry because our sins offend God Who is All Good and deserving of all our love.

Intentions matter. In the first reading, Ezekiel directs us to warn the wicked. If we don't, we bring guilt upon ourselves. Doing nothing matters. If we do, if we try to turn the wicked away from wicked things, even if the wicked refuses, we save ourselves.

Put this in terms we can relate to today. Let's say a coworker gets a promotion that I deserved. Am I upset because maybe my coworker was better prepared? Or am I upset because I was genuinely unfairly treated? How I shape my response is integrally born from how I feel; my intentions direct my actions.

That is why I love the second reading. Paul succinctly sums up the Ten Commandments in this way: Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Most people would say that it is our actions and words that mean everything. What we do and what we say are essential.

Yet it is God who knows our hearts. He knows and counts every hair on our head. He knows our intentions.

Jesus directs us in Matthews Gospel to confront those who sin against us, first one-on-one, then, if necessary, with one or two others and finally, if still necessary, to tell the church. If even that fails, then to treat him as a Gentile or tax collector.

Mind you, though, Jesus still loves Gentiles and tax collectors.

The next time we pray, the type of prayer when we are talking to God in full transparency as a child talks to his mother, remember that God know us better than we know ourselves. And that a good thing. Rely on Him and He will lead us down a good path.

When we act, we need to act in a way that glorifies God. When we speak, we should say what glorifies God.

And when we ponder in our hearts, let us dwell on He Who knows us best. He Who feeds us with His Word and with His Sacrament which we now turn to share. This way, our thoughts, our intentions, lead to words and actions that show our love for Him and for one another.