

Homily  
Friday of the First Week of Lent  
March 3, 2023

Why do we do the things we do? This is the season when we reflect more deeply on those things we need to improve in ourselves. What things do we find most prevalent that need our attention and God's help?

I often share my struggles with traffic. Some drive too slowly. Some drive too fast. Some change lanes as if no one else was on the road. Some drive on my rear bumper as if that will make me mover over or drive faster. If only everyone would drive like me, the roads would be a much safer and happier place.

I have a confession to make. My driving as gotten much better as I've grown older and more patient. What that means is my driving years ago was much like that of those I complain about today. What does this say about my judging other?

In confession, I'm told that most people tend to confess the same sins, over and over, time after time. I certainly seem to. When asked why we tend to sin the same sins repeatedly, the priest answered with a question, "Would you prefer to confess a whole new list of sins?"

I try do to better. And even though my confessions seem to be on repeat, I believe I am do better. Maybe two steps forward, one step back, but at least I seem to be going in the right direction.

With that said, I often find, like with my driving habits, as I remove or reduce my sinful tendencies, I also tend to be judgmental of those who I perceive as sinful in those things used to do. I used to drive too fast and change lanes erratically, and I harshly judge those who do this now. Doesn't that make me a hypocrite?

Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, "...unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

He isn't telling us to judge the scribes and Pharisees, but He is telling us to look at ourselves. It can be a tempting distraction to look at others and judge when I judge myself better. John Bradford said, "There, but for the grace of God go I," when looking upon a line of prisoners heading for execution. I need to be careful to not look at that line and also say, "and that makes me better than them."

We may have many examples of what not to do, but we have a responsibility as member of the Body of Christ to love our neighbor and hate the sin, not judge our neighbor and forget our own sinfulness.

"...you will not be released until you have paid the last penny." This is our warning from Jesus that we all have a debt on our heads that we will never be able to repay, except in our loving benefactor, who paid our debt for us. Let's focus on our own areas in need of improvement and rejoice in God's mercy, love and forgiveness.