

Homily
Memorial of Saint Lawrence of Brindisi
Priest and Doctor of the Church
Friday, July 21, 2023

Rules are a means to help maintain civil behavior in this world, and a means to help protect, guide and instruct us as we grow. If we don't obey the higher rules (don't run on an icy sidewalk), then we will obey the lower rules (gravity). Like it or not, rules are in place to make life better.

Who remembers having a curfew growing up? I would often wait until I was a minute late just to see how far I could push the rules. It usually didn't go well, and I was sternly told that I was crossing the line and that next time I might not be so lucky. Isn't that the way it is in life? We push the boundaries of the rules in place; the speed limit on the highway (I usually go about 4 mph over), leaving clean dishes in the dishwasher too long before emptying it out, coming to church after the processional song or after the opening prayer or after the first reading (how late is too late for this to be a valid Mass?), we often rely on the mercy of those who make the rules to let us off the hook. For the record, any time after the dishwasher is done is too long (Yes, dear).

On our faith journey, we remember that God makes the rules. We follow the narrow path and enter through the narrow gate. It's not our rules, but His. And it is important for us to remember that violating God's rule opens us up to His judgement. His creation; His rules.

I am blessed to be a minister of Baptism. Also, I lead the Pre-Baptism class that parents are required to attend before that Baptism. In this class, I point out one of God's rules as depicted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 1257, "The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal life." The Church takes Baptism very seriously.

In that same paragraph, we are also told, "God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments." This seems like a contradiction or at least some level of hypocrisy. But, "God's creation; God's rules." We are better off to follow God's rules than to rely on His mercy.

In today's Gospel, Jesus allows his disciples to pick the heads of grain on the Sabbath, a violation of the Sabbath law. The Pharisees object. Jesus instructs them that, "...the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath." In a similar passage in Mark, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." God made rules not just to make rules, but to make our lives better.

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and doctor of the Church. St. Lawrence was a learned man, fluent in seven languages and, in his humility, declined a second election to vicar general of the Capuchin friars, opting to be an advisor to his successors. His discipline and humility is a testament to the wisdom for us to 'follow the narrow path in order to enter the narrow gate.'

In our effort to be Christ to the world in all we say and do, let us remember that, while we can know God's mercy, we should not rely on it, but do our best to follow His rules, the rules He made for us to make our lives better and more fulfilling. God knows best. And on that, we can certainly rely.