

Homily
Monday of the 33rd Week in OT
November 20, 2023

Who has ever succumbed to peer pressure? When you were a teenager, had any of you ever smoked or drank or broke curfew, or worse, because some group of ‘friends’ pressured you??

What kind of peer pressure do we suffer from today? The greatest pressure I suffer now is my granddaughter begging me to ‘play one more game’ when I have work to do. She has me wrapped around her little finger. But, then again, so does my wife.

What about our faith? Do we stand up for what we believe or do we quietly acquiesce and say nothing. Do we confidently proclaim the Real Presence or the necessity of Sunday Mass with friends, neighbors or coworkers who don’t agree? Do we wear our faith on our sleeve for all to see?

In today’s first reading, we hear, “In those days there appeared in Israel men who were breakers of the law, and they seduced many people, saying: ‘Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us.’ The proposal was agreeable...”

The year 145 corresponds with the year 167 BC, not too long before Jesus came along and set us straight.

Fortunately, we also hear that, “many in Israel were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with unclean food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die.” Can we stand as determined? Can we uphold our beliefs against a God-less nation?

The world has always suffered from evil men and weak hearts. But, what about today? Abortion is becoming normalized; crime is rampant; corruption is common at all levels of society. And speaking out is nearly criminal. How can we remain uncorrupt? If we stand up for what we believe, if we speak out, if we proclaim the Good News, will we be scrutinized or condemned by our peers? Will we lose our job or our friends? Will we suffer?

Jesus tells us our faith will save us. The blind man asked for the miracle of sight, and Jesus granted it. Are we also blind? Do we lack faith? I sometimes hesitate to stand up for what I believe for fear of what others might say or do against me. It is in these times that I need to remember the basics: Love God and love our neighbor; everything else will fall into place.

When we rely on God, we succeed. When we align our will to His, we win. When we rely on what our neighbor may say or do against us, we lose what is most important – God. I’m not saying that we have to die for our beliefs as the Israelites did. But we do have to consider what is most important in our lives; our relationship with God or with our peers. Jesus offers us sight. Maybe we should keep our eyes focused on Him.