

HOMILY 5TH SUN OT YRA 2017

A number of years ago when I worked for the State I was sent to Vermont to help them out for a couple of months. It was in the fall. How many of you have been to Vermont in the fall? The colors are breathtakingly beautiful. The Green Mountains are in Vermont and they are called the Green Mountains because they are not really high mountains. They are not above the tree line. Really tall mountains have no trees at the top because trees will not grow at that elevation. The Green Mountains are covered with trees which makes the colors spectacular. And the mountains look absolutely untouched by human hands during the day. But at night you can see lights. You cannot see the people or the buildings, but you can see the light that the people need to go about their activities. And the more the leaves fell, the more light you could see. It was really quite interesting, and the more lights you could see, the more interesting it became. There were all kinds of activity going on in those mountains that you just could not see during the day. During the day it was hidden.

I thought of this when I read the Gospel reading: “A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.” We are called to be light for the world. We are to let our light shine before others so that they can see our good deeds and glorify our heavenly Father. I think that we need that light in our world today more than ever. There are a couple of ways that we are called to be light for the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. Everyone here has that faith, but we do not always let that light shine, maybe out of fear.

One way is to share our faith. When I say share our faith or evangelization, I think we frequently go right to proselytizing, forcing people to believe or judging or condemning them if they do not believe. We cannot impose the faith or teach it with the best arguments. Pope Francis points out that “the Church grows by attraction not by proselytizing.” It is sharing our faith when it comes up in conversation and when people are open to hearing our story. Why are we hesitant to do that? Is it fear that someone may not agree with you? We have conversations all of the time where people do not agree with us and that does not stop us from talking about the topic. Is it fear that you may offend someone?

Have you ever been offended by someone sharing their faith? If so, that is probably a good example of what you should not do. Don't do it. I think being Catholic is just about a bunch of negative rules telling us what we cannot do. That is not what being Catholic is to me, and my guess is that is not what being Catholic is to you. It is about a better way to live. I believe that living a Catholic life is the best way to live. People tell me all of the time how their faith has gotten them through difficulties, how it changes their lives. You are doing a great job telling me; tell others who are questioning their faith. You do not need to dazzle people with your knowledge of the faith, dazzle them with the love of Jesus Christ. When you talk with someone who had a bad experience with Church, tell them the Church is not perfect. Tell them your experience of Church. Bring them to St. Edith to find out.

Another was that we can be light for the world is by loving and serving others. Are we afraid to do that? Are we afraid that if we share some of what we have with others we will not have enough for ourselves? Are we afraid of looking foolish or being taken advantage of? I try to give people the benefit of the doubt, and sometimes I get taken, but that is not about me. I did what I thought was right. That is all about them. It is about taking time to hear people's story and trying to help them. It is about treating others with dignity and respect. It is about doing the right thing even if it makes life more difficult. It is about loving everyone, even the people that it is difficult you to love. It is about respecting all human life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death and everything in between. Sometimes I think we see so much bad behavior on the news and in the media that we unconsciously start imitating that behavior. The more we see people being treated with love, dignity and respect, the more likely we will be to imitate that behavior.

We are all called to be light for the world. None of us are going to light up the world on our own, but if we all allow our light to shine, the world can be a better place. How are you called to be light for the world?