

## HOMILY 4<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRA 2017

There was a new American doctor who wanted to use his skills where he could do the most good. He decided to go to Calcutta to work with Mother Theresa and the Missionaries of Charity. When he got there he found Mother Theresa and she told him to go with Sr. Priscilla. They went to a building with a sign that said: “House for the Dying and Destitute.” He imagined one day changing the sign to read: “House of Hope for the Living.” They walked through the wards with rows of cots with people in great pain who looked like skeletons with skin. He thought: “I can really make a difference here.” But they continued to walk. They got to the kitchen, where they were preparing lunch, and he thought: “I guess they want to feed me before I get started,” but they kept walking and went out to the back alley. Sr. Priscilla pointed to a large pile of garbage that was so revolting that the young doctor gagged. Sr. Priscilla said: “We need you to take this garbage down to the dump, several blocks down on the right.” She handed him a shovel and two buckets and walked away. So the young doctor began working. At the end of the day the pile was gone, and he walked back to the building that he had walked through earlier that day. There was a note on the door from Mother Theresa that read: “You can do no great things – only small things with love.” I guess Mother Theresa thought that the young doctor needed a lesson in humility. Now the young doctor was a good person. He wanted to do good. He went to Calcutta to work with the poor, but he also realized that it wasn’t about what he thought he could do to help the people, it was about serving the people, meeting their needs, and some days that would mean shoveling garbage.

The readings today are all about humility. In the Gospel reading we hear the Beatitudes. I think the most important one is the first: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What does this mean? We do not often use the words “poor in spirit.” Fr. Joseph Krempa re-wrote this Beatitude and this is what he said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who realize their spiritual poverty and need for God. Theirs is the Kingdom of God because they are open to the riches of God’s

Kingdom. They know they are not spiritually self-sufficient, that the soul does not nourish itself. They know they are in need of God.” Humility is the realization that we cannot live this life alone. We need to stay connected to God. The young doctor made a very selfless decision to work with the poor, but his discernment did not end there. That doctor was not going to single handedly change that building from a “House for the Dying and Destitute” to a “House of Hope for the Living.” If that were his goal, he would have quickly been discouraged. But he could make a difference in people’s lives one at a time, doing small things with love. Every day we need to stay connected to God to discern what he is calling us to do. Sometimes we discern the big decisions, and then take over from there ourselves. I have to remind myself of that all of the time.

Every year for the past 7 years we have done a Mass count in October. Every year we find that 20% of our registered parishioners attend Mass on any given Sunday. Every year I hope for an increase, and every year it is the same. But that is not what God wants me to focus upon. I need to focus upon all of the individual things that God is calling me to do each day with love, and that may or may not lead to an increase in Mass attendance. I believe that God has a plan for each of us. Do we believe that? If we do, why do we make so many plans without him. Sometimes we consult him on the big decisions and leave him out of the small ones. It is frequently not about doing great things; it is more often doing little things with love. Sometimes it is about being patient when it is difficult to be patient, pushing on when we want to stand still, being silent when we want to speak, forgiving when we think the other person does not deserve forgiveness, reaching out to someone in need when they are difficult to be around. Today with our new administration, many people are worried about the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized in this country. God is in charge, he has a plan. Maybe we each need to focus upon doing small things with love.