

HOMILY 13th SUN OT YRA 2017

How many of you are familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs? I want to talk about it a little today because I think it helps us to understand the Gospel reading. The theory proposes that we have a hierarchy of needs, and until we have the lower level needs met, we cannot work on satisfying higher level needs. The most basic level is physiologic needs for food, water warmth and rest. Until we have these basic needs met, we really cannot focus on other needs. The second level is safety needs for security and safety. The third level is belongingness and love needs. The fourth level is esteem needs related to a feeling of accomplishment. The fifth level is self actualization. I want to give you a Catholic version of what self actualization looks like. It is knowing God, having a relationship with God, knowing your talents and charisms, and using them to love and serve other people. It is about becoming the person that God meant for you to be. This is what the spiritual journey is about and we will be working on this for the rest of our lives. We are hard wired for God and satisfying the lower level needs will ever really satisfy us.

There are forces in our culture that work to prevent us from getting to self actualization. They are forces that encourage us to become so fixated on lower level needs that we cannot focus upon God and self actualization. The materialism in our culture encourages us to focus upon acquiring possessions that really just meet our physiological needs. We have a multi-billion dollar advertisement industry that tries to convince us that we need things that we do not even want or is unhealthy for us. We start to perceive a need that is not really there. An extreme example of this is hoarders. They spend their whole life obsessed with material possessions and can never really focus upon anything else. Our culture also encourages us to focus upon safety and security. We have financial planners telling us that we have to save millions of dollars before we retire. In the extreme case there are people who spend their whole lives on their portfolios. If you are looking only to money for your safety and security, you will never have enough. In the Gospel reading Jesus says: "Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not

worthy of me.” This is related to belonging and loving needs. This does not mean that we should abandon our friends and relatives. What it does mean is that if someone is preventing you from having a relationship with God or preventing you from doing what God wants you to do, that you cannot make that relationship more important than God. What you may need to do is distance yourself a little from someone or better yet help them to understand how important it is for you to live the life that God is calling you to live.

Jesus also says: “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.” Putting someone else’s needs before our own is sometimes very difficult. This is one of the crosses Jesus is talking about. Our culture encourages us to focus upon esteem needs for personal accomplishment. In the extreme case there are people that will do whatever they need to get personal recognition. Now to a certain extent, we all have to focus upon meeting our own needs, but if we are going to reach the self actualization phase of our lives, we have to stop focusing upon our own needs and focus upon the needs of others.

Jesus also says: “And whoever gives only a cup of water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple – amen I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” This is important not only because it is good to satisfy someone’s thirst, we are also meeting some of the lower level needs so that they can focus upon higher level needs. This is what we should all do as church. Through our Christian Service activities we should be trying to meet people’s physiological needs. The church community should be a safe and secure place. We need to try and make everyone feel that they belong here and are loved here. We need to help people identify their talents and charisms and use them so that they can feel a sense of accomplishment. If we help one another do that, we can all focus upon our relationship with God and becoming the person that God meant for us to be.