

HOMILY ~ FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 9/10, 2024

Who remembers Mohammed Ali? Remember how he talked in rhymes? Years ago, he was asked by a youth from a rough neighborhood how he could quit school and start a boxing career since he had bad grades in school. He smiled at the young man and said:

***Stay in college and get the knowledge,
And stay there! Til you're through,
Cause if God can make penicillin out of moldy bread,
He can make something out of you.***

We hear in the Second Reading the great love God has for us, and the plan he has for each one of us. We hear, *"For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them."* If we can follow that plan, we will be able to live lives with meaning, purpose and joy in this world; and we will be prepared for the next. That is how we can ***Build a Better Life***. I think this starts with being very mindful of what is important in life. Our culture tells us that greatness is defined by money, power, pleasure and fame. You will not find meaning, purpose or joy in any of these things. As soon as you attain a goal in one of these areas, you just move on to the next goal. It is a never-ending treadmill. The things that are important to ***Build a Better Life*** are faith, family, friends and work that serves others.

In the area of faith, regular Mass attendance and daily personal prayer are essential. We need to have a sense of the transcendent, a sense of something bigger than ourselves, a sense of connection to a faith community and with our human family. In the area of work that serves others, this can be the work that we are paid for, but it does not have to be. Many of us find this through volunteer activities, and we have many here at St. Edith. We have also talked about how important *Acts of Kindness* can be, acts that are big and small, acts that will change the world.

In a 2021 Study of the Pew Research Center in the United States and all over the world, people reported that family was the biggest source of meaning in their lives. If family is the biggest source of meaning in our lives, we should be spending much more time nurturing these relationships. How many times do we take them for granted or throw them away when there

is some kind of conflict. We also need close intimate friendships. These are long-term friendships where we can share our hopes and dreams, our failures and disappointments. I think of these friendships as the family you get to pick. When conflicts arise, we need to resolve them.

When we have a conflict with a close friend or family member, the first thing we need to do is pray for them and ask God for a vision of how he can help you transform the difficult relationship. The next thing we need to do is to empathize with the person. Try to feel what they are feeling. Let go of resentment. Soften your heart. We also need to stay connected with the individual. You just need to show up with love. You do not necessarily need to talk about the problem. Do not let the problem define your relationship. Friends and family member are not always going to have the same values, opinions or points of view. In fact, it enriches your life if you are connected with people of different religions, different political parties and different sexual orientations.

Life would be pretty boring if everyone were the same as I am. Some of my relationships are very rich because we are very different, but we complement one another. Introverts and extroverts are very different, but together they are perfect. When you encounter the differences, do not try to change them. Try to understand them. We can frequently accept what someone is doing if they do not expect us to change our values. Many times conflicts arise because we have different expectations about the relationship. Do not try to read minds. Talk about your expectations. You cannot expect people to do things they are just not able to do. Generously give what you can give and gratefully accept the gifts of others

If you want to ***Build a Better Life***, stay connected with the Lord to discern the plan he has for your life. We are God's handiwork. Focus upon faith, family, friends and work that serves others.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim