

HOMILY CHRISTMAS 2017

Do you remember me?
I knelt upon my knees.
I prayed to you of childhood fantasies.
Well, I'm all grown up now.
And still need help somehow.
I'm not a child but my heart still can dream.
Well here's me life long wish,
My grown up Christmas list.
Not for myself, but for a world in need.
No more lives torn apart,
And wars would never start,
And time would heal all hearts.
And everyone would have a friend,
And right would always win,
And love would never end.
This is my grown up Christmas list.

That is what we all really want for Christmas, isn't it? The decorations and the parties and the presents under the Christmas tree are really nice, but don't we really want something more? Do we think that something more is even possible? I think it is, but to begin moving in that direction we have to remember who we are as Catholics, who we are as Christians. First and foremost being Christian means that we are following Jesus and living the Gospels. We can never lose sight of this. Sometimes we get too caught up in doctrine and dogma and following rules; however if we follow Jesus and really live the Gospels, we don't even really need to rules. That is what Jesus taught us when he gave us the New Commandment; love God by loving and serving one another.

Many upsetting things have happened in our world this past year, terrorism, unrest, war, violence. So many people are acting badly, some of our politicians, some of our entertainers, some of the people in the media. They get a lot of publicity, and we have to remember that we cannot follow their example, we cannot model their behavior. We have to remember that we are following Jesus. These famous people will come and go, but Jesus is a constant in our lives, and we need to remember that we are following him.

What is the example that Jesus has given us. We heard an account of the incarnation in the Gospel today. This is what Jesus chose. He chose Mary to be his mother, a totally unknown poor woman. He chose Joseph to be his father, a totally unknown poor man. He chose to be born into a poor family in a stable because there was no room at the inn. He chose to grow up in Nazareth, an ordinary place not known for anything. He announced his birth to lowly shepherds, people who were powerless and the bottom of society. And how did he conduct his ministry? He was in a poor and vulnerable position. He never forced anyone to do anything. He excluded no one, in fact he reached out to the poor and the vulnerable and the outcasts. That is who he spent much of his time with. He included everyone and accepted people as they were. Never in the Gospels did he say: “Go get your life straightened out and start following the rules and then come back to me.” In fact, he rarely spoke about the rules and when he did he was criticizing the scribes and the Pharisees for applying them too arbitrarily rather than helping people. Two thousand years ago he changed the world and that is how he did it. Two thousand years later millions of people are still following him. He loved everyone as they were. That is the example we are to follow.

Our theme for advent was “Everyone Belongs.” I liked it so much that I want it to be our theme for Christmas. What I want for Christmas is for everyone that comes to St. Edith to feel as though they belong. We are all on a spiritual journey. Come as you are and make the journey with us. I think we have made great progress at St. Edith welcoming people, accepting everyone where they are and making everyone feel that they belong. It is about loving everyone where they are. That is what Jesus did. Everyone belongs with Jesus. No one is excluded. If it is possible at St. Edith, it is also possible outside of St. Edith. We can join with Jesus in fulfilling our grown up Christmas list. Together with Jesus, we can change the world.