

HOMILY 18TH SUN OT YRB 2018

How many of you have been to the Grand Canyon? I was on vacation for the last couple of weeks, and I was there. When we got to the park, we got on a bus to drive us to the South Rim. The bus driver gave us some information about the Grand Canyon on the way. He said that we really do not know how the Grand Canyon was created, but it a combination of water, wind, ice and erosion. When we got to the rim, he told us that we could get off the bus but he was leaving in 20 minutes, so be back on time. When I first saw the Grand Canyon it was just awesome and overwhelming. I have seen pictures of the Grand Canyon, but you just have to be there to see it to get a sense of the enormity of it. The Grand Canyon is the size of the state of Delaware! I thought: “I am not sure exactly how the Grand Canyon was created but I am sure that God had a lot to do with it. The awesome power of God!” After 20 minutes I did not want to get back on the bus but it was time. As I approached the bus I noticed a wall made of stone about 3 feet tall. You could sit on the wall on either side. You could see the Grand Canyon, or you could sit with your back to the Grand Canyon. I noticed a whole line of people sitting on the wall with their backs to the Grand Canyon on their phones! We were all seeing the same thing but I guess everyone did not have the same reaction to the Grand Canyon as I did.

Today in the Gospel reading, Jesus had just performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish and fed 5,000 people. The people were searching for Jesus because they wanted more free stuff. They wanted to see more miracles. In fact they said: “What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you?” What sign can you do? Weren’t you there when I fed the 5,000? What more do you want? You already got your sign. They were only looking for more free stuff, more miracles, like it was some kind of magic show or something. Now the Apostles got it. They were staying with Jesus to hear his teaching. They had all seen the same

thing but some got it and some did not. I think we are like that today. Sometimes we “get it” and sometimes we do not. Sometimes when things happen that we did not expect, that we did not want, we expect God to perform his magic. Can’t you just take care of this so I can get what I want? Can’t you just take care of this so I do not have to suffer? I have come to realize that when something happens that I do not expect, something happens that I do not like, I ask myself: “What am I supposed to learn from this?” And then I come to realize that God is taking care of things for me, just not in the way I had expected.

Do you believe the signs that Jesus gave us that are reported in the Gospel? Do you see the signs of God’s power and presence in our lives today? If so, we need to make God the center of our lives. Our culture tells us that we should be concerned with success, power, money, possessions and other people’s opinions of us. If that is the center of our lives, our lives will be pretty shallow. The author Jack Higgins, who wrote *The Eagle Has Landed* as well as other successful novels was asked one time in an interview: “What would you like to have known as a boy?” His answer: “That when you get to the top there is nothing there.” Now there is nothing wrong with success, power, money, possessions or other people having a positive opinion of us, but if that is the driving force, when you get there is will be pretty empty.

To make God the center of our lives means that we need to live the Gospel. Living the Gospel does not mean memorizing it or having all of the answers. It does mean trying to learn the lessons of the Gospels and trying to live each day the way Jesus showed us how to live. To live each day trying to do God’s will. In a world that couldn’t care less, Christians need to care more. We need to be willing to help everyone we meet. We need to look out for the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized and welcome them into our church. That is what Jesus did. That is what he continues to do.