

## **HOMILY ~ AUGUST 7/8, 2021**

### **19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

I have been on vacation for the last couple of weeks, and one of the National Parks I went to was Yellowstone in Wyoming. It is a beautiful park; and if you have never gone, you should put it on your list of places to go. It is another country so different from the country we know here in Michigan. The National Parks are very crowded this year. Everyone is ready to travel as COVID eases up, and no one can leave the country, so they are traveling in the United States. If you are going to see the different sites at Yellowstone, like Old Faithful, the Painted Pots, Mammoth Hot Springs, you have to drive to them because the park is really big and things are spread out. And you have to park in designated areas at the sites. Because the park was so crowded, parking was limited. One day we pulled over to the parking area at a particular site, and there were no parking spaces. It was 106 degrees that day, and I think patience was wearing rather thin. As we pulled in, I noticed two men, outside their cars, yelling and screaming at each other, fighting over a parking space. We decided to just let this go and move on to the next site. As we were pulling away, I noticed above the parking space they were fighting over was a sign that read "No Parking." I wonder if the man that won the fight over the parking space ended up with a ticket. Anger causes us to act in ways that are sometimes crazy and usually not productive.

We heard in the Second Reading today: "All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ." These sound like words of wisdom that we really need to hear today. I think because of COVID, the world has come to look like a hostile place. There is an invisible virus out there that can kill us. We are afraid of one another, afraid of getting one another sick. We are in isolation and separated from a lot of our support systems. Because of all of the isolation, we have become more self-centered and less able to understand the point of view of others. The world is not a hostile place. Part of returning to normalcy is to realize that God has given us a great place to live that is full of goodness. As we move out of the pandemic, we need to be more kind, compassionate and forgiving as St. Paul has told us.

So what do we do with all of the anger? We cannot just ignore it because if we do, it is going to come out in unhealthy ways. Anger is a feeling that we have in response to what is going on in our environment. Anger is just a normal reaction, it is not sinful. It is what we do with the anger that can become sinful and destructive. Anger can lead to crazy behavior like fighting over a parking space. If we act out of anger, it is never going to lead to anything good. Anger is a spiritual problem that requires a spiritual solution. Anger interferes with

our relationships with other people and with God. We need to own the anger, name it and sit with it a while. Then we have to try and return the anger with love. Love requires sacrifice. We need to sacrifice the momentary pleasure we may get from blasting someone and instead, respond with kindness and compassion. A cooling off period is usually required. Acting with kindness, compassion and forgiveness is really what we want in the long run.

One of the things that really made me angry recently is all the talk about going back to wearing masks and social distancing. I just do not want to do that. And we know what stops the spread of the virus. It is the vaccine. And we know the masks and social distancing do not work as well. I am angry with the people who have not gotten the vaccine. I talked to a few people about it, and I decided to pray about it to try and find a spiritual solution. I know that some doctors have advised their patients not to get the vaccine for various reasons. I have been recommending that people consult their doctor. I cannot be angry with them for taking their doctor's advice. Some people are really afraid to get the vaccine. I do not share this fear, but other people's fear is real. I guess I cannot be angry with people for being afraid. There are some people that have listened to all of the news and what is posted on social media, and they do not know what to believe. I guess I cannot be mad at people for being confused. In the end, I am not really angry with anyone; I am just tired of having to live with the virus. And I have to remember what I have been saying for many years: No Judgment! Being angry and blasting people is not going to make the situation better; it would just be part of the problem.

I have to remember that the world is not a hostile place. The world that God created for us to live in is very good. And the people that God created to live in this world are basically good, that is how God created us. We need to let go of the anger and replace it with kindness and compassion. That is really how we are going to get through this pandemic together. That is how we are going to make this world a better place.

Love & Peace,  
Fr. Jim