

HOMILY 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

February 28, 2021

A number of years ago I took my niece, Delaney Doris, with me grocery shopping. She was about four years old. She always wanted to get in the cart when we went grocery shopping, not in the child seat in front, but in the cart. I think she wanted to check out everything I was buying. I was walking up and down the aisles looking for the things that I wanted and she said: “Uncle Jimmy.” And I said: “yes.” And I kept looking at the items on the shelves, and again she said: “Uncle Jimmy.” And I said: “yes.” And then again she said a little louder: “Uncle Jimmy.” And I said: “yes, I am listening to you.” And she said: “No, I want you to listen to me with your eyes.” And I knew what she wanted. She wanted my full attention. She did not want me to be only paying half attention to her; she wanted my full attention.

In the Gospel reading we hear an account of the Transfiguration. The Father said about Jesus: “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” Now do you think that he had the full attention of Peter, James and John when he said this? I think this message was really important, and he made sure he had their full attention before he said it. Look at how he set that up. Jesus took them up a high mountain apart by themselves. There were no distractions there. Jesus’ clothes became dazzling white. Then Elijah and Moses appeared to them, and they were conversing with Jesus. Do you think he had their full attention? Do you think they were listening with their eyes? Then the Father said: “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” Jesus is the Son of God. Listen to him. Our primary task as Christians is to listen to Jesus.

Listening is incredibly important. We need to start by listening to one another. The first step in loving one another is to really listen to one another. I came across three “hearing aids” for listening. The first one the list is, listen with your eyes. Approximately 80% of communication is non-verbal. Facial expressions and body language usually tell the real story. Look at people when you listen to them. Secondly, listen with your heart. Tune in to the emotions behind the words. Finally, take time to listen to the people around you. How often when we are with other people are we looking at our phone? I learned a new word today, “phubbing.” This is a combination of phone and snubbing, “phubbing.” It is snubbing the

people around you because you are attending to your phone. How often have you done that to other people? How often have people done this to you? Jesus sometimes talks to us through other people. We are sometimes the voice of Jesus in the world. I wonder how many times we missed the messages from Jesus because we were just not listening.

Above all we have to listen to Jesus as the Father has commanded us. We need to listen in prayer. Listening to Jesus is much like listening to people. First of all, we need to listen with our eyes. In prayer, that means closing your eyes. You need to cut out all of the visual distractions. Next you have to listen with your heart. Be aware of your emotions. God may be rising up these emotions in you. Are you feeling spiritual consolation or desolation? Are you being comforted or challenged? Do you feel a sense of calm or peace? Communicate to Jesus what you desire, and frequently this can be better done in feelings than in words. Listen for insights. You will not literally hear the voice of Jesus, but you may get insights during prayer. You know that it is an insight from God if it is something that you never would have come up with yourself. Sometimes you can feel God's presence with you. Finally, you have to give Jesus your undivided attention. You should pray in a quiet place. No "phubbing" Jesus. You should probably leave your phone in another room when you pray. Studies have shown that when your phone is in close proximity to you, it is distracting even if you are not actually looking at it. This may be hard at first, but once you have done it for a while, you will not be drawn to it. I have been seeing someone for spiritual direction for over a year. Recently his mother-in-law was visiting for a week and she has dementia. She could not be left alone. She needed a lot of attention, and he could not find any quiet time for prayer. He told me that his prayer was totally different. He was still praying, but he had constant distractions. He told me that he felt off balance every day that she was there. He had a hard time being quiet in prayer at first, but after he did it every day for a period of time, he just felt off balance when he could not do it for a week. So listen to the Father. "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."