

HOMILY ~ June 25/26, 2022

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Several months ago, I ran across a poem by the poet, Mary Oliver; and it has really stuck with me, so I want to share part of it with you today.

Doesn't everything die at last,

and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

So, what do you think? What do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? What makes life precious? I think our life is precious because our time in this world is limited. We all know intellectually that our time here is limited. When we are young, we tend to see death as so far away that we do not even have to think about it. As we get older, death becomes more real; but we tend to not want to think about it. Although with COVID, I think death has become a little more real for all of us. I think it is important to face our ultimate death, not in a morbid way, but in a way that makes us want to make the most of the time we have.

Steve Jobs once said that since he was 17 years old, he began every morning by looking at himself in the mirror and asking himself this question: *"If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?"* Our wild and precious earthly life is going to come to an end. How do I want to spend it? And what makes our lives wild? Life is full of possibilities. If we can become the person that God meant us to be, we will find happiness and fulfillment; but we need to take some chances.

In the Gospel Reading today, I think Jesus gives us some ways to make the most of the time we have in this earthly life. When Jesus and the disciples are entering a Samaritan village, they are not welcomed. James and John ask Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven to consume them; and Jesus says, no, let's just journey to another village. I think the message is not to get caught up in the negativity. We all come in contact with negative people in our lives. We need to treat them with love and dignity, we do not know what is going on in their lives; but we cannot get caught up in the negativity, just move on.

Someone tells Jesus: *"I will follow you wherever you go."* Jesus tells him that I do not even have a place to lay my head. Jesus is telling us to be the best version of ourselves, the person God intended us to be, and that will involve challenges, pain and some suffering. Expect that and do not let that discourage you from going for it. You will probably have some failures along the way, but it will be worth it when you get there.

Jesus called another individual to follow him and he responded: *"Let me go first and bury my father."* What he is really saying is: *"I will follow you when all of my family responsibilities are finished."* When will all of your family responsibilities be finished? Family responsibilities may need to take a priority in your life right now. Jesus certainly wants us to fulfill the responsibilities we have, but it probably does not have to be an all or nothing thing. Maybe we can start taking steps toward where we may be headed while fulfilling those responsibilities. I have also talked to people who keep praying and discerning but are waiting for an overwhelming sign from God before they move forward. You may get stuck there forever. I think we need to take steps on the path we feel called to follow for the next phase of our life; and then pray about what we are doing to discern if we are on the right path.

Another individual tells Jesus he will follow him: *"But first let me say farewell to my family at home."* Jesus said: *"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."* Jesus is telling us not to get stuck in the past. We cannot change the past. We need to learn from it and move forward.

People have told me: *"I tried once and failed, so I am not going to try again."* *"I fell in love and my heart was broken, so I am never going to put myself out there anymore."* *"Years ago, a priest or someone on staff at a parish said something mean to me, so I left the Church."* Really? Are you going to give someone who said something or did something in the past control your life today?

I have made several big changes in my life. Going to seminary was one of them, and it took me about three years to make the decision. I started volunteering at church, I got a spiritual director, I started praying regularly, I went on a discernment weekend at the seminary; I made a friend who was a seminarian, and he invited me to things at the seminary. I spoke with the vocations director. Was it hard to give up my law practice, sell my house, get rid of all of my stuff and go to seminary? I was taking a chance, but I am really glad that I did. **So,**

what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim