

HOMILY ~ 15th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JULY 13/14, 2024

How many of you have a bucket list? A bucket list is a number of experiences or achievements that a person hopes to have before they kick the bucket. Some examples may be to take a trip to a particular place, like the Grand Canyon or the Pyramids in Egypt; purchase your dream house; become CEO of a large corporation; save 20 million dollars. As I have heard people talk about their bucket lists over the years, I think it is more realistic to say that a bucket list is a number of experiences or achievements that a person will probably never do before they kick the bucket. Unless you are making very concrete plans to do these things now, you probably never will. I wonder if the things that we have on our bucket list are things we really value.

In the Gospel Reading today, Jesus sends the 12 Apostles out, two by two. He tells them to take nothing but a walking stick and a pair of sandals. I think Jesus' point was that this is an important ministry and this is what I am calling you to do, so just get on with it. You have me, and you have people to support you, so that is all you need. They could have spent a lot of time planning what they would teach to make sure they had all the details right. They could have calculated how much money they would need, what supplies they needed to take and all kinds of things. Jesus told them to just do it.

Sometimes rather than getting on with it, we put things off until the future. Maybe we will just put it on the bucket list for now. Sometimes we plan and plan and plan; and we never quite get around to doing things, because we never feel that we are quite ready.

In sharing and practicing our faith, Jesus is telling us to just do it. If you are here, you have faith; you are part of a faith community, so you have everything you need. Just get to it. I have talked to people who have told me that they do not think they know enough about their faith to share their faith. If you are here, you have enough. You will not be teaching a class. You will be sharing your experience. I have been a priest for 21 years; and people are usually not interested in the details of church teachings, doctrine and dogma. If someone asks you a question that you cannot answer, ask me. I am very accessible.

If you are not praying now, when? There is no wrong way to pray. You do not have to attend daily Mass and have a holy hour every day. Start with 10-15 minutes. Try some different things and see what resonates

with you. Get involved in the Parish. You may be telling yourself that you will get more involved when you have more time. Some things require a big commitment, but we try to have some things that just require a one-time commitment. Try it and see if you want to get more involved.

I think some of the things that are on our bucket list are not the things that are really important to us, and they may not be the things that God is calling you to do. I think what is really important is living in the present, living today in a way that is consistent with your values. That is probably what God is calling you to do. You have to decide what that means for you. Do you value helping others? Do you value being kind and generous? Do you value living a life of integrity, doing the right thing even when no one is looking? Do you value getting closer to your spouse or your children? Do you value having some really close friendships? Do you value having more fun and helping the people in your life have more fun? Do you value learning every day? I bet none of these things are on your bucket list, but these are the things that will give your life meaning.

As a priest, people sometimes assume that I would like to become a bishop, work in a downtown office, have a building named after me. I do not value any of those things. I am living my values every day, and that is what God is calling me to do. I used to have a list of places on my bucket list. I have come to realize that when I am on vacation, I just want to spend time on trips with the people I love and where we go is secondary.

Maybe taking your family to Disney World is on your bucket list, but is that important? When I ask kids who have gone to Disney World what was their favorite part of their vacation, they usually tell me something like spending time with my family or swimming in the pool at the hotel. That is what they value, and you do not have to go to Disney World to do that. By the time you can afford your dream house, your children will be all grown up; and you do not need all the room, and you are too old to take care of that big house.

We have to have some direction in our lives. Do you really value what is on your bucket list? What do you value? Live your life each day according to your values. You will be much more likely to be doing God's will. Just get on with it.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim