

HOMILY ~ 31st SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

NOVEMBER 2/3, 2024

How many of you are on election overload? There is so much divisiveness, negativity and hatred. I can hardly stand it. I am not learning anything new. I cannot wait for this election to be over. If you have not done so already, get out and vote. My prayer is that regardless of who wins the election, we can move forward and work together to solve the problems that exist in this country and in the world. My fear is that if the polls are right, regardless of who wins the election, half of the country will be unhappy and will be unable to let go of the divisiveness, negativity and hatred.

In the Gospel Reading today, Jesus gives us the new commandment, ***Love God and Love your Neighbor as Yourself***. These ideas are not new, they are found in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. What is new is that he presents them as two sides of the same coin. Jesus tells us that this can replace the 10 Commandments and the 613 Commandments in the Jewish Torah. Jesus tells us that this new commandment summarized all of the laws and the prophets. We should spend our whole lifetime figuring out how to follow this new commandment. This is the love of action not sentiment. This is the only time in the New Testament that Jesus and the Scribes agree on anything. While this new commandment is very challenging, it is hard to deny the value and truth of the new commandment. If you bring more love into the world through action, you will be happier, you will make other people happier and you will make the world a better place.

I want to talk about a couple of ways we can do this. With Thanksgiving and Christmas coming up, are there people that you need to love a little more? In his book, *Fault Lines*, Karl Pillemer of Cornell University reports that 65 million Americans say that two or more of their family members have stopped talking all together. I think much of this has been caused by political disagreements. Do you have family members that you are going to feel very uncomfortable with at family gatherings? You have time to work on that in advance. You are probably not going to go from not speaking to best friends, but maybe you just need to open a door that has been closed. You may have some family members where you just need to

place some healthy boundaries on the relationship, but do you need to totally cut off that relationship? Maybe you can just agree to disagree about certain things and just stop talking about them. If you are not successful in this effort, you will be glad that you tried; and if you are successful, you may make your whole family a little happier.

Another way to bring love into the world through action is in the workplace. Think about how you can bring love into your workplace by using your skills. I was reading about hospital janitorial workers. There was one man who worked on a chemotherapy ward. The people on this ward are really sick and nauseous. He said that his job is not cleaning up vomit, although he spends a lot of time doing that. He sees his job as social connection and humor. He wants to connect with the patients and make them laugh. The patient laughs, and he laughs. It is not in his job description, but that is why he gets out of bed in the morning and shows up for work every day.

Another way that we can bring love in action into the world is to help someone else. We all have people in our lives that can use our help so try to make a point of reaching out to people in need. Our Social Worker, Patti Kelly, is working to provide Christian Service volunteer opportunities at St. Edith. As Patti identifies them, they fill up quickly. Someone was telling me recently that they have tried to volunteer, but by the time they go to sign up, the opportunities are full. We are going to partner with a new agency called **St. Joseph's Helpers** where we can provide simple home repairs for those in need. They will be speaking after Mass today, so I will let them tell you about their mission. Deacon Don is starting training for **Stephen's Ministry** at St. Edith. It is a ministry of listening. Listening is an important skill, is it one of yours? If so, see Deacon Don.

We cannot single handedly change politics in this country; but if **we** change, we can have an impact. Instead of focusing on the divisiveness, negativity and hatred, we need to focus upon the solutions, not the problems. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told us, *"You cannot defeat hate by hate. You can only defeat hate by love."* It is all about the love.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim