

HOMILY 30TH Sunday Ordinary Time

October 26, 2025

When I was young, many years ago, I thought I would have it all figured out by the time I turn 30. I thought I would be finished with college, I would have my career launched and be on the right path, I would be in a long term relationship and ready to get married. I thought that until I was 30, and none of those things were true. I then thought I would have it all figured out when I turn 40. However, by the time I turned 40 I realized that I would never have it all figured out. There are not many straight lines in life. Once you think you have it figured out, life happens and you know you are not quite settled. That is certainly true of the spiritual life. I always get a little uncomfortable when I get too comfortable. It is not going to last. God does not want us to be comfortable. He wants us to grow. Sometimes we have no choice but to go along with the changes, and sometimes God gives us a choice about whether or not we are going to cooperate with his plan. I have learned that his plan is the best choice.

We hear a parable in the Gospel reading today. A parable is a story that Jesus tells to teach a moral or spiritual lesson and they usually really make us think. In this parable, we over hear the prayer of a Pharisee and a tax collector..At that time the Pharisees were the spiritual leaders, teachers and role models for the Jewish people. The tax collectors were collecting taxes for the foreign Roman government which made them hated outcasts among the Jewish people. Jesus turns this on its head, criticizing the Pharisee and affirming the tax collector. So, let's look at the prayer of the Pharisee, "O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like the tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income." First of all, does it sound as though he thinks he has to all figured out? If we think that, we are closing ourselves off from all spiritual growth. We should always be discerning what God is calling us to become. The second mistake is that he is comparing himself to other human beings. That is just not helpful. Everyone should be working on becoming the best version of themselves that God is calling them to be, and that is different for each one of us. Our role model is Jesus.

I know that old phrase “What would Jesus do” has become a cliché, but maybe we should be asking ourselves that more often.

So how do you discern what God is calling you to do? In prayer admit that you do not have it all figured out and ask God for help. We have to have some quiet prayer time where we are listening to God and open to what he is telling us. We also have to be open to the opportunities that are presenting themselves in our lives, particularly if they are being offered repeatedly or from multiple sources. Frequently what we are supposed to do is right in front of us, we are just not open to it. Next, define what you value most in life. These are things like: family relationships; creativity; making a difference in the community; developing a spiritual life; achievement in a profession; helping others; being a kind person. This is what matters most to you. This can change during your lifetime but it tends to be more stable. It may be part of what you do for a living, but not necessarily. It can come from your volunteer work, a hobby, or just part of your day to day life. Next, decide how you can live out that value. This is what gives your life purpose. This will change in the different seasons of your life. Let me give you an example from my life. What I value most is helping others. That was my role in my family growing up. I was the helper. When I went to college, I chose psychology and guidance and counseling to prepare for a helping profession. I worked at a state agency helping disabled people. I then became a manager there and helped the people who worked for me be successful. Then I went to law school and helped people with their legal issues. Now as a priest, I help people spiritually. When I retire someday I will have to discern how I can help others through different activities. My core value did not change, but how I lived that out, my purpose, changed.

So, when you pray, acknowledge that you do not have it all figured out and ask God for his help. Make sure you have some quiet time with God so you are open to what he is trying to communicate to you. Be open to what life is offering you. Look to Jesus as your role model. Name your primary value; what matters to you most. How are you going to live that out? That is what will give your life purpose.