

HOMILY 12TH Sunday Ordinary Time

June 21, 2026

I think most of us probably know some people who say they are spiritual but not religious. They say I can pray anywhere, and that is true, but I think it is just more difficult to pray without any structure that comes from religion, and without any external norms that we get from coming to church once per week and worshiping with other believers. And I think we need an external moral compass. We can rationalize anything to ourselves, but that does not make it right. The new thing that I have heard talked about recently is being religious but not spiritual. This is what Jesus criticized the Pharisees for. They turned the Ten Commandments into 613 commandments, followed them to the letter of the law, but had no spiritual conversion. This can happen to us when we are on automatic pilot in our religious practices, but we are not living them out in our lives. I think maybe we need to be spiritual and religious.

In the Gospel reading Jesus tells us “do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” So, what do we need to be afraid of? We have to remember that we have a body and an immortal soul. We need to fear the things that damage the eternal soul.

Let’s talk about spiritual but not religious. We have seen a very significant decrease in participation in all forms of organized religion. There has also been a decrease in participation in community groups and local social organizations as well. We are becoming more and more isolated. I think most people who are spiritual would agree with some form of the Golden Rule, love your neighbor as yourself. To love others you have to be in physical contact with them. The opportunities to love our neighbor are decreased if we are in isolation. We need to fear social isolation. We have become a society that has privatized morality. Without organized religion we are pretty much free to decide for ourselves what is moral. We are becoming more and more fearful and less trusting of one another because we do not know what people consider moral behavior. This is particularly true of people outside of our

particular group. For example, we have seen a deepening of political divides. We may think we know someone's total value system based upon one of their opinions that are different from ours. We may then fear people outside our group and feel that we cannot trust them. If we spent more time interacting with people, we would find that we have more in common than we think. When we come to St. Edith, we can be relatively certain that we are all people of faith and have similar moral values otherwise we would not be here. This makes it easier to trust the people that you meet at St. Edith.

And let's talk about religious but not spiritual. I think we need to ask ourselves periodically if we are growing spiritually through our spiritual practices. Are we growing closer to the Lord and are we able to better love our neighbor? If not, maybe we need to switch things up a little in our prayer or how we are living out our faith. Life is a spiritual journey and we will never be done in this world. Have we decided we can love our neighbor through social media without face to face connections? I suppose we can be superficially kind but can we love? Or have you decided to replace relationships with technology? If instead of meeting someone for coffee we decide to scroll social media instead, maybe we should rethink this. Are we willing to replace real personal relationships with AI? We can develop the perfect spouse or friend with AI, someone that looks exactly the way you would like them to look, talks to you exactly the way you want to be talked to, always agree with you, but it is not a relationship. This is not real. We need people we can confide in and will call us out when we get off track. I am worried about the number of people, particularly young people who are using AI instead of having a best friend, or even a counselor or a therapist. We need to be a little afraid of AI. Our Catholic moral compass cannot stay in church. We need to apply them to the way we live outside of church. Regarding the war in Iran, this is a very complicated issue but I think there are things that are more important things to consider than the cost of gas. People are talking a lot about that, but maybe it is just something safe to talk about that we can all agree upon.

So, what do you think? Do we need to be spiritual and religious?