

HOMILY 27TH SUN Ordinary Time

October 4, 2026

I was reading about a man that had it all. He had a job where he made a lot of money, a million-dollar house, several vacation homes with all the toys to go along with it. He had a beautiful wife and two children, a boy and a girl. The problem was that he was miserable. He hated his job but used his coworkers to get promotions for the money. He rarely spent time with his family, so they built a life together without him. He was working all the time, rarely going to his vacation homes and most of his time spent at home he was asleep. He got his values confused. The way he lived his life indicates that he loved things, he used people, there was nothing to indicate that he loved his family, and he followed what our secular culture considers valuable.

In the Gospel reading today we hear another parable. The vineyard in the parable is our world; the produce of the world are things and people. As Catholics we then must decide who or what we are going to follow. We should use things, all of God's creation is good and God created them for our use. We should love people, the most valuable part of God's creation, and we should follow Jesus. That means love your neighbor as yourself. That means respecting the dignity of all human beings from the moment of conception to the time of natural death.

One of the biggest things that is damaging our relationships with people is the smart phone. We are allowing technology to replace our relationships with and our contact with other people. We cannot love and serve others without having personal contact. I went to the Fisher Theatre a couple of weeks ago to see a play. There were 4 women sitting in front of me in their 40's who came together. When the lights came up for intermission they all took out their smart phones. One woman was scrolling through pictures of fingernails. The second was taking pictures of her program and the closed curtain and appeared to be posting them on Facebook. The third was scrolling through pictures of women's hair styles. The fourth was on her phone but I could not tell what she was doing. Now I don't know about you, but if my friends preferred looking at fingernails and hair styles to interacting with me, I would be a little insulted by that. And instead of interacting with friends and enjoying the moment, I am going to post something on Facebook, there seems to be something wrong with that. However, we do things like that all the time.

I think we are constantly pulling out our phones because we can no longer stand to be bored for even a few minutes. Stopped at a traffic light, in line at the grocery store, sitting in a doctor's waiting room, the phones come out immediately. There was a study done among college students. They were individually put into a room with nothing to look at, nothing to listen to, and they could not bring their phones. The only thing they had was a key fob that would allow them to administer to themselves a painful electric shock. 25% of the girls and 67% of the boys gave themselves a painful electric shock. They would prefer experiencing physical pain to being bored. I am going to suggest to you that we need that time being bored to assess what we are doing, to see the ways that we can help others, to assess the quality of our relationships, to examine our lives. It is during the boring times that God communicates with us. My guess is that the best insights come to you in the shower because you do not have your phone in there and you are bored. We are on our phones avoiding the interactions we could have with others, with both people we know and strangers. And you never get those valuable insights.

Now I am never going to get you to give up your phone. You can hardly do anything without a smart phone, you know what I mean. But the average person looks at their phone 205 times a day. I want to suggest to you 5 tech free times and zones. Pick what will work for you. First, the first hour of your day. No phone. Now I would suggest you have a holy hour in the morning and pray. I started doing that over 30 years ago, long before I became a priest, and it changed my life. Some of you are looking at me saying I cannot give up an hour in prayer. Well, take a walk and do not take your phone. You can get your steps in and be present in your surroundings and let your mind wander. If you cannot do that, get ready for the day in silence. You will be surprised at the insights you get and how it changes the course of your day. Second, no phone when you are around people, people that you know or people that you do not know. Interact with them. Third, mealtimes. Interact with the people you are sharing a meal with or if you are alone, enjoy the food and let your mind wander. Fourth, no phones in the classroom. You cannot multitask and you are there to learn. Fifth, no phones in the bedroom. Let your mind wander as you fall asleep and you will sleep better.

Remember to keep your values in order. Use things, including technology, love people, those you know and those you do not know, and follow Jesus, love your neighbor as yourself.