

HOMILY 28TH Sunday Ordinary Time

October 11, 2026

A few years ago, a man came to church in a t-shirt that said, “I cannot be nice to more than one person a day and today is not your day.” On the back of the shirt, it said, “And tomorrow does not look too good either.” Now I normally do not pay a lot of attention to what people are wearing. I think as long as you are dressed, I am just glad that you are here. But I did think that t-shirt was an interesting choice to wear to church. Now I did not know the man. Maybe he just thought it was funny. Maybe it was a warning to the people he encountered. Love your neighbor as yourself? I wonder what Jesus would think about that.

Today we have another parable. A man was inviting people to his son’s wedding. Those who were initially invited refused to attend, so he just invited everyone so he could fill the hall with guests. One man came, he was not wearing a wedding garment, so the host threw him out. You have to understand that at the time, if you went to a wedding you were expected to wear a wedding garment. If you did not have one, your host would give you one. So not wearing a wedding garment would be an insult to your host. I think the message is that you have to do more than call yourself Christian. You have to at least try and put on Christ. Love your neighbor as yourself.

I was reading this week about the increase in political violence in our country. The number of threats against judges has more than tripled over the last decade. Threats against members of Congress increased from about 900 in 2016 to 9,600 in 2021. We are living our lives with political violence going on in our churches, at schools, at grocery stores and in people’s homes. What I find particularly disturbing is that one in 5 Americans believe political violence is justified under certain conditions, and one third of Americans believe that political violence may be necessary to get the country back on track. I have also heard people say things like, “I would not wish them dead, but if it happened, I would not feel bad.” It bothers me that we seem to be accepting that violence is necessary. If things are going to get better, we need to envision something better. Put on Christ. Love your neighbor as yourself.

We have huge divisions in our country. Being Democrat or Republican has become the most important thing we know about people. We have come to believe that if we know a person's political party we know all of their beliefs, what they are for and against, where they tend to live, what they watch on TV, if and how they worship, who their friends are, their educational level, their occupations. These are stereotypes and as with all stereotypes there is some element of truth to them, that is what makes them tempting to accept as true, but we know it is totally unfair to judge groups or individuals according to these stereotypes. But the more we accept them, the greater the divisions become. The more we accept them the greater the divide. The more we reject these stereotypes and get to know people personally with face-to-face contacts, the more we will realize that we have way more in common than we have differences. Put on Christ. The more we will be able to love our neighbor as ourselves.

I am an attorney, and I have a great respect for the legal system. While it is not perfect, it gives order to our world. In the past, our legal system has worked because people respected the law. For the most part, if you knew something was illegal you did not do it. And if a law was unfair or did not lead to the results that were intended, we worked on changing the law. Not so true anymore. Some people just decide what is best for them and then do it, even though they know it is illegal. You try and stop me. We know some areas of the law are broken but let's just continue to criticize it rather than trying to fix it. If our legal system is going to work, we have to work together. Put on Christ. Maybe we need to love our neighbor as ourselves.

I want to invite you to look at your own attitudes toward political violence, political divisions and our legal system. Are our Christian values eroding over time because of constant exposure to dysfunction. If we want something better, we need to envision something better. Love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus was very wise when he gave us the new commandment.