HOMILY 30TH Sunday Ordinary Time
October 25, 2026

I think the way we greet people really sets the tone for our interaction. You can greet someone with a kiss. That would indicate some level of familiarity and affection. That will probably be a good encounter. You can greet someone with a hug. That is someone you probably at least know and like. Probably a positive encounter. You can greet someone with a handshake. This originally symbolized that I am not carrying a gun or a weapon. This indicates that it will be a safe encounter. This can be exchanged with someone you do not know. Physical contact is important. You can greet someone with a smile. This indicates that you would welcome some social interaction. It indicates that you are friendly. You can have this greeting with someone you do not know. You can also greet someone by making eye contact. This indicates that you are not hiding who you are. You can tell a lot about someone from looking into their eyes. It also invites a social interaction. Have you ever just wanted to walk through a group of people without being stopped and tell your friend, "Don't make eye contact." The way you greet someone can set the tone.

In the Gospel reading today Jesus gives us the new commandment, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus also tells us the whole law and the prophets depend upon these two commandments. These are the two legs of a healthy Christian life. If you try and have one without the other you will not have a healthy Christian life. How do we love God? First of all, by worshipping him. Regular Mass attendance is a great way to do this. Secondly, you have to have personal prayer where you are discerning what God is calling you to do. This involves developing a relationship with God. This means moving from "saying my prayers" to "praying," from "praying to God" to "praying with God." And he is going to lead you to use your gifts, talents, and charismas to serve other people. You cannot have your own private personal spirituality detached from the world. What is the love of neighbor that Jesus is talking about? It is not the warm fuzzy feeling kind of love. That could be part of it, but it is all about how we treat others with dignity and kindness. Your spiritual life must lead you to love and serve others. And we frequently need God's help in discerning what is the loving thing to do.

On the surface it may seem like a loving thing to do, but we sometimes can do more harm than good. Sometimes we serve others but are neglecting our responsibilities. Without God's direction we can get confused about our priorities.

Certainly, we must have in person interactions with others to love and serve them. You cannot love others by text, email or social media. We say we get likes on social media, but that has nothing to do with liking or loving you. It is about liking the text. We are getting more and more isolated and divided. We need to push ourselves to have more interpersonal contacts with others, people that we know and people that we don't know. Some of us need to push harder than others. Be very conscious about how you greet others. Greeting with a kiss or a hug is usually an easy thing to discern, but force yourself to greet others with a handshake, a smile and by making eye contact. And when you do have that personal contact, you have to accept them for who they are without judging them. If you detect that they may have a different opinion, then you do not judge them as the "evil other." When we judge someone as the "evil other" there is usually some type of fear underlying that. Do you really need to be afraid of that individual? In my everyday life I rarely meet people that I need to be afraid of. Since I have become aware of that I can just accept people for who they are. You do not have to agree with them; you do not have to like them. You just have to accept them for who they are. And if you do find that the person has a different opinion then you just listen to them. Really listen to them rather than trying to formulate your rebuttal. And ask a few questions. Maybe you will see another side to the issue, and maybe the people you are talking to will follow suit and listen to you. You may find out that you have way more in common than differences. And if you cannot find common ground you can end the conversation with something like, "I will have to give that some thought."

If we are going to break down the divisions in our country, we have to start with more personal contacts and then just accept people for who they are. Be very intentional about how you greet people. And build your relationship with God. Move from "saying my prayers" to "praying" and from "praying to God" to "praying with God." Give that some thought.