

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday  
6/25/2023

## THE YEAST

To fear no one. That's a tall order. Jesus says this as he is sending his apostles out on mission. As we saw last week, Jesus called others to him. He invites them to share in his mission and now he sends them out, not permanently yet, but he sends them forth, he missions them. He wants to work through others.

Three times he tells them not to be afraid. Their only fear is to be separated from the love of God. They're not even to fear death because there's something more than just this life. Or as Emily Dickinson put it rather simply, This world is not conclusion. Yes, we value life. We value all human life as a unique and unrepeatable gift of God that only God is to give and only God is to take. But at the same time, we realize that this life isn't the be all and end all, that there is something more, much more.

St. John says that *Perfect love casts out fear*. I don't know about you, but that certainly means my love isn't perfect and yet I try and I hope we all try. There are two types of fear: a healthy fear and fear that leads to evil. If you're out hiking and see an angry grizzly bear, you will be afraid and your fear is going to tell you to avoid that bear. And that's good. It can preserve life but there is also a bad fear.

St. Francis de Sales wisely noted that after sin itself, the most destructive thing in life is fear and obviously, he means bad fear. This fear closes us in on ourselves. It heightens suspicion and causes us to be greedy. Fear blocks our vision and in extreme cases fear leads to violence. People burn crosses on other people's front yards because they are afraid of them. So often at the root of prejudice, racism, hatred and so many other evils that disrespect human life, is fear.

But there's another way to look at it. Every temptation is also an invitation. A temptation to gossip is an invitation to respect others. A temptation to lie is an invitation to grow in truth. A temptation to leave Mass right after Communion is an invitation to stay for the entire Mass. And the temptation to fear is an invitation to trust, to trust in God, even if it costs us our life.

Jesus also calls the apostles and us to acknowledge him before others, to not be ashamed. Elsewhere, Jesus warns against performing religious acts for others to see but at the same time calls us to be faithful to him not just in our hearts but in our relationships; not just in our prayer life but in our public life. We're not called to be show offs in our faith but neither are we to ignore or even deny it. It's easy to compartmentalize our lives saying, this is my faith life over here and this is my professional life over there and yet to truly be effective, our faith is to permeate our lives just as yeast permeates a mass of dough allowing it to become bread.

This past week we celebrated St. Thomas More who died because he refused to violate his conscience or you could say because he refused to compartmentalize his life. His faith would not allow him to accept Henry VIII's attack on the unity of the Church and the dignity of marriage. He feared separation from God more than he feared the considerable wrath of his king.

To isolate our faith from the rest of our life, sets us on the road to hypocrisy. And hypocrisy, perceived or real, is something that leads people out of the Church or prevents them from entering.

The work of apostles is carried on today by their successors who are bishops and yet every week in the creed we profess that the entire church is apostolic. That means we share the faith of the apostles. That means in one way or another, we're all sent, we're all missionaries. St. John Paul II taught that *to say Church is to say mission* and in a similar vein, Pope Francis speaks about us all being missionary disciples. God also wants to work through us.

What we share is a gift. St. Paul tells the Romans that *the gift is not like the transgression*. What is the gift? He goes on to say that it's *the grace of God*. More appropriately, the gift is not a what but a who. St. Paul goes on, *the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ*. Jesus is the gift we receive and Jesus is the gift we share whether by our words, our actions, our example, in big ways and in every *little way*.

That gift reaches a highpoint here in the Eucharist. Mass isn't just about what Jesus did two thousand years ago but also what he continues to do today. We enter into the moment of his death and resurrection and he continues to give himself to us and to lead us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. He continues to love us. He continues

to give himself to us. All of the sacraments are windows into the mystery of God's love for us and fountains of his grace for us.

Jesus reveals God the Father to us but he also reveals to us what it means to be human; to be authentic; to not compartmentalize our lives but rather to live lives of intentional faith, lives of apostolic faith. We seek to live lives where the yeast of faith permeates the entirety of who we are and what we do and where the love of God casts out fear. We seek to live lives where, because we have begun to realize God's love for us, that we seek to live as Jesus lives, to serve as Jesus serves and to love as Jesus loves.