

Homily – Catechetical Sun – 25th Sunday – Cycle A
Sept 18, 2011

R: = Deacon Ron Tocci **C:** = Cathy Tocci

R: You know, the other day I was thinking...

C: Oh, boy, here comes trouble...

R: Really funny...But hear me out...I was thinking about the 1st question I like to ask the kids when I'm teaching a religion class or in small group on retreat...

C: Wut question is that..."Who's your favorite country singer?"

R: No...Well, yes, I do ask them that one too...But I'm talking about this question: "Why do you think Jesus came into the world?...What was God's purpose for sending His Son into the world?" ...Do you know wut almost every one of them gives as their answer?

C: Hmm...I'll guess they would answer: "Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins,...to suffer and die so that our sins wouldn't keep us from going to heaven."

R: Yep, that's it...They don't put it quite as eloquently,...but that's usually their answer...And of course, that's a good answer...But Jesus giving Himself for our sins,...was only part of the story...only part of His mission...He spent 3 yrs before that carrying out the other part of His mission...Do you know what that was?

C: I think so...It was to tell us and show us what God the Father is really like...Jesus was God's way of revealing Himself to the world so we could know Him in a more personal way.

R: Right again...You know, you're not just cute,...you're pretty smart too.

C: Oh, really...It took you 48 years to figure that out?

R: Alright, what I want to emphasize today as we honor the teachers in our SOR,...is that a big part of Jesus' mission was teaching...and the main purpose of His teaching was to help us to know God the Father, to get a true picture of God,... to see God - not as a powerful king sitting on a heavenly throne, looking down on us, waiting for us to mess up so He could punish us,... but rather a God who is near to us,.. a God who wants only the best for us and who wants us to be our best... a merciful God who will give us chance after chance to be our best...and who will never give up on us. ... A God who will love us whether we deserve it or not...

That's the God that Jesus spent 3 years revealing to the world,...and He did it in a masterful way,... very often by telling a story,...by using a simple word-picture,...called a parable, ...such as the one He told in today's Gospel.

C: When Jesus told a story, he brought it to life for his listeners, by using words like a paintbrush to create vivid, colorful images....mini dramas about characters and situations people were familiar with...stories about a steward who cheated his master....about a shepherd searching for one lost sheep...about a know-it-all son who leaves home and blows all his cash... about a nagging widow who kept pestering a judge until he gave her what she wanted....so many stories....all of them having an important message about God and about God's Kingdom.

R Let's look at the parable we just heard and see what it tells us about G...In this parable, Jesus talks about a landowner who needed to harvest the crops in his vineyards,...so he goes out and hires some workers at 6 am and promises to pay them a daily wage...Later in the day, the landowner goes out and hires more workers,...some at 9am, more at noon, some at 3pm, and then some at 5pm...Everyone's happy to be working,...but things take a surprising turn at 6pm when it's time to pay the workers. ...The landowner pays ALL of them the same amount – a day's pay – the ones who worked only 1 hour near the end of the day as well as those who worked much longer during the hottest part of the day...As you would expect, the workers who

started earlier complained to the owner for treating them all the same...Then the owner tells them they had no business questioning why he was so generous...So what is this little story telling us about God?

R: First off, in this story the landowner represents God...and the workers are all of us...The conflict in the story is that sum of the workers couldn't accept that the boss was so generous to those who had done much less work...It sounds unfair... and to us it is....because as Isaiah reminded us in the 1st rdg, *God's way of thinking is not our way of thinking*... Jesus is telling us that fair and unfair do not enter into God's way of thinking...If God were fair, if God rewarded us according to what we deserve, none of us would get to heaven – none of us -....This parable shows us a God who is generous, full of grace, and forgiveness...who gives us chance after chance. ...not because we deserve it,...but because Jesus ...the sinless one suffered and died for our sins...Was that fair?...No! It was terribly unfair... but that's the way God does things. We call it grace....amazing grace.

C: Using parables like this one, Jesus makes God more real to us,...He helps us to see more of the true nature and character of a God we can never hope to fully know or comprehend. ...When He returned to the Father,...Jesus commissioned His Church to carry on His mission of helping others to better know God....and the folks we honor today—the people who teach in our School of Religion (SoR) - are a vital part of this mission.

The teachers who make up our SoR volunteer faculty bring many different gifts and talents to their classrooms....Some are moms and dads, some are young professionals, some are teachers in our public and catholic schools, some are high school or college students, some are retirees....All have been called to this ministry by LOVE,...their love of our faith, love of our children, and love of our God. Like Jesus, they teach...using stories, the Bible, family situations and current eventsto help their students come to know God in a personal way....to understand that his love encompasses them in all that they do....to know that His mercy is complete, that his acceptance and forgiveness is there for all who go to Him...to know that God's grace, as one of our Life Teen songs proclaims "is enough".

R: I know that song..."Your grace is enough...your grace is enough for me."

C: Just had to work in some singing didn't you? We should all be glad it wasn't a country song.

Some of us grew up learning about God out of the Baltimore Catechism....and I'll bet most of us remember the basic questions and answers....

R: Oh, yah. I was a real whiz when it came to Catechism...

C: I'll bet you were... **R:** Go ahead, test me.

C: All right...First question.....Who made you?

R: That's easy...God made me.

C: Here's a harder one...Why did God make you?

R: Hmm...Let me see...Oh,...God made me....(*stumbling for words, prompted by Cathy*) to know him, to love him, and to serve him and... ..and to be happy with him in this world and in the next...See, I told you I was a whiz.

C: Oh, you're something all right.

Anyway, did you notice that the 1st part of the answer is... "to know Him"?... Just like our relationships with anyone else,... we need to know God before we can love Him and serve Him... We don't trust people, we don't call out to them for help... we don't promise our lives to them... we don't love them... unless we really know them... Jesus understood that, and so do our teachers.

R: Ok... Jesus taught us a lot about God the Father, but He didn't just do it with words and stories, did He?

C: No He didn't... When the apostle Phillip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father,"... Jesus answered him, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father"... So, another way for us to know what God the Father is like, is to look at the Jesus we know from the Gospels... look at everything He said and did, ... how He lived and loved and died... all a reflection of the Father... because Jesus and the Father are one.

Our teachers know that if they want to help our young people to know God,... they can't do it through words and stories alone... They know that their love for God and their love for their faith have to be real ... If they aren't living what they are trying to teach, their words will mean nothing.

R: Ok, our teachers play a part in getting our young people to know God so they will learn to love and serve Him... But aren't they actually part of a team?

C: They sure are. I call it the God Team. Teaching our young people about God is a team effort and a lot of us are part of that team... Religion teachers, our priests and deacons, parish staff ... parents godparents, family, and friends - all on the God Team.... and each of us is expected to teach our children what Jesus and others have taught us.... The best way we can do that, is by trying our hardest to live as Jesus lived.... Parents... you are the first and most important teachers of the faith for your kids. You are the captains of the God Team... The rest of us are here to help you.

On your child's Baptism day, you promised that you would teach him by word and example "to keep God's commandments as Jesus taught us.. by loving God and loving our neighbor." ... Remember?... In a few moments as we ask God's blessing on our SOR teachers, that blessing reaches out to you parents too – the primary teachers of your children,... so that together all of us on the God team will help them to know God, to love God, and to serve God... and to be happy with Him in this world and the next. AMEN.