

Second Sunday of Lent – Year A - 2014

5000 years...About 5000 years ago Moses came down the mountain carrying two stone tablets with the 10 comm. God had given him to present to His chosen people – the Israelites, our spiritual ancestors.and to this day, these commandments serve as God's blueprint for how we are meant to live in loving relationship with God, and with each other....It wasn't until about 3000 years later when God Himself delivered what I like to call the 11th commandment...You won't find the 11th commandment in the Catholic Catechism, though I think it should be in there because it gives us a more complete picture of how God wants us to live and be and do as human beings created in His image and likeness...Can you guess what this unofficial 11th commandment is?...It's only three words....It's in one of today's readings...It's in the Gospel... LISTEN TO HIM!...Listen to who?...God's beloved Son Jesus!...That's the unofficial 11th commandment...Thou shalt LISTEN TO HIM.

In our Gospel, Matthew tells how Jesus took His closest disciples - Peter, James and John - up the mountain,..and there they witnessed an amazing, incredible scene...Suddenly, Jesus was transfigured - transformed - right before their eyes...For a brief moment God revealed a Jesus who was not only totally human, ...but also totally God...His face shone as bright as the sun, ...and His clothes became like dazzling white light...J. became on the outside what He was on the inside...Now if after that the disciples still weren't sure who Jesus was,...that voice speaking from the clouds had to remove all doubts...When they heard "This is my beloved Son...Listen to Him,"...they knew it was God telling them, "This is My Son. ...His voice is My voice. His words are My words.... LISTEN TO HIM!"...What God proclaimed to those disciples on that mountaintop 2000 yrs ago,...and what He is telling us today through His sacred word is that Jesus speaks for Him...Jesus is in charge....Do things His way... Listen to Him...

When Jesus and the 3 disciples were headed back down the mountain, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen or heard until He had risen from the dead.Now I'll bet that after what happened on that mountaintop, those disciples responded to His command with something like, "OK, boss. Whatever you say. Whatever you want ...We'll do it!"...You see, we can't call ourselves true disciples – true followers - of Jesus Christ unless we too listen to,... pay attention to, and obey His words...We need to let the words of Jesus transform us....change us...let them wash away our false self so that our true self, our holy self shines through... let His words transfigure us...change us.

Change... These 40 days of Lent are a time for us to really buckle down and work on how we need to change....to REPENT...Repent. There's a misunderstood word...Last weekend, Fr. Tony Gittins told us that to repent doesn't mean we "feel miserable" and go around beating our breast because we are dirty, rotten sinners...No, to repent is to think and do differently,...to allow Jesus to show us and teach us and strengthen us to think and do differently than we've been thinking and doing...You know, Lent gets a bad rap because we associate it with darkness, a barren desert, wearing ashes and long faces. But the Good News is that Lent should be a season of JOY because repenting always leads to joy...In John 15, Jesus promised that His joy would be our joy if we keep His commandments, if we think and do His way.

Now before I go on, if there are any of you who think that you have nothing you need to change,...no need to repent,... that you are perfectly fine the way you are,...you can close your eyes and take a nap...because what I say for the next few minutes won't apply to you...I'll wake you when it's over...

Ok, here's a question: What is the main thing that should motivate us to change, to repent ? ...Is it FEAR,...fear of God's punishment,...fear of going to hell ?... When we do anything out of fear, ...it doesn't involve our heart,...it doesn't become part of who we are,...so it likely won't last...Our desire to change – if it is to be real and lasting - should be rooted in LOVE ...1st of all in Jesus' love for us....This is a never-changing truth,...:Jesus LOVES US!....If we ever forget that,...we only need to look to the cross, look into the eyes of the crucified Jesus,...eyes that

say to us "See how much I luv you." ...He loves us in spite of what He knows about us...He sees every weakness, every fall we take. ... He sees every wrong turn, every poor decision... He's seen the worst in us.... His love for us doesn't depend on how good or how bad we are... Do you believe that Jesus loves you just the way you are ? ...If you do, then say it out loud after me: *Jesus loves me just the way I am!*...Ok, now do you also believe tha Jesus loves you too much to want you to stay the way you are...because He knows you can do better?...If you believe that, then say it out loud: *Jesus loves me just the way I am...but He knows I can do better.*

Alright, we want to repent because we know Jesus loves us and wants the best for us...We also want to repent - to change our way of thinking and doing - because we LOVE Him...We love Jesus and we don't want to hurt Him... Every time we sin, it's like pounding another nail into His outstretched arms. ... Every time we sin it breaks His heart because our sin hurts others and hurts ourselves - the ones He loves...The best way two show Jesus our love is to work on trying to become like Him,...to live like Him.

What would living like Him be like ?...I want you two imagine that for one day, for 24 hours, the heart of Jesus is transplanted into your body?...Nothing else is changed...You live in the same house,...have the same kids...same parents ...You go to the same school...have the same friends...You have the same job...same boss...Nothing changes except that you live your life with Jesus' heart. ...Your heart gets the day off...What would you be like?... Would your family,..your friends,...your co-workers ...notice any change?... Surely they'll notice how you care more about what you can do for them than for what you need. ...What about those people who have done you wrong?...Won't they be surprised at how tolerant and forgiving you've become?... How about the poor, the needy, all those having a hard time making it?...With the heart of Jesus, you'll have more understanding and compassion and do more to help them.

And of course the way you act in traffic will be totally different...No cutting off other drivers, no middle finger salutes... And you know those people you're always badmouthing –the ones who really tick you off... Now you can't find one bad thing two say about them....Yep, in just one day with the heart of Jesus ,...there'll be a lot of changes in your thinking and your doing.

My friends, here's the big thing, the Good News: ..WE CAN CHANGE... We aren't stuck being the way we are. ...If you're a grouch, you're not condemned to eternal "grouchy-dom."... If you're always worried and anxious, ..you don't have to worry yourself to an early grave...If you've been a bigot for 20, 30, 40 years,... there's no reason why you have to die a bigot...If you're chained to some sinful habit, ..that chain can be broken...If you're always doing wrong things with the excuse, "I can't help it; it's the just way I am,"...well – news flash - you don't have to stay that way.

No matter how much we are NOT like Jesus, we can change...But it won't happen unless we obey the 11th commandment...(what is it?) LISTEN TO HIM...focus on Jesus...and only Jesus...Listen to what He tells us in the Gospels....Listen to what He tells us in the words of the preacher's homily...Listen to what He tells us when we take the time to sit with Him in silent prayer and let Him enter our thoughts...Listen to Him as the priest echoes the words Jesus spoke to His disciples at the Last Supper: "This is my Body...to be given up for you...This is my Blood which will be poured out for you."...LISTEN TO HIM....

During that Last Supper, Jesus rose from the table, took a towel and a basin of water and washed the feet of His disciples – including Judas who would betray Him...When he had finished,Jesus said to them, " I have given you an example,... as I have done so you must do."

We have His words,...we have His example...As we come forward in a few moments to receive His precious Body and Blood into our own body...Let His presence within us give us the strength and the will to change,... to think differently and do differently.

Will you make a commitment with me to do this for the rest of Lent...maybe longer...I promise, it will do more good for us than giving up chocolate and French fries....Are you with me? Good,.. may the Lord give us the strength and the will to do it! AMEN!