

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time Homily – Deacon Brian Cordeiro

- ❖ In 1989, Robin Williams starred in an award winning film. The film was “Dead Poet’s society”. Directed by Peter Weir, it had Robin Williams starring as Professor Keating of an aristocratic boys’ prep school and enthusing his students to refuse to accept the status quo and to strive for the best each day.
- ❖ The slogan used by Keating to rally his students was the Latin phrase “Carpe Diem” or seize the day, grab the moment, make the most of what you have each day.
- ❖ Our readings today do the same for us today. They warn us against becoming complacent and accepting status quo. We are encouraged to persevere to the end. We are at the start of a new year; but we have just completed a 7 week series on Life in the Spirit and our youth and those who accompanied them have returned from World Youth Day in Madrid, all occasions of grace in our lives.
- ❖ Our first reading says that if a good person stops doing good; he or she cannot expect to rest on the laurels of the past. The flip side is that a person who was evil in the past has the chance to change and come back to God. What is even more interesting is the comment of Jesus in the Gospel that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of heaven before you. The tax collectors and prostitutes were considered the worst of sinners just as they are today. Yet they are considered going ahead of the priests and the elders because they are willing to change and turn around their lives. One of the biggest surprises we may receive in heaven is to see those whom we least expected to be ahead of those whom we thought would be right up front. What makes the difference is the turning around. If we are on the right track, we need to continue on that track and if we have not been on the wrong track, we need to turn around and come back, the good news is that our God never closes the door on us.
- ❖ How do we do what we require?

Reading St John Chrysostom on the temptations of the devil

The five paths of repentance

Shall I list the paths of repentance? There are certainly many of them, many and various, and all of them lead to heaven.

The first path is the path of condemnation of sins. As Isaiah says, *Tell your sins, and you will be acquitted*.

This is the first path of repentance but the second is in no way inferior to it in excellence. It is to forget the harm done to us by our enemies, to master our anger, to forgive the sins of those who are slaves together with us. As much as we do this, so much will our own sins against the Lord be forgiven. So this is the second path to the expiation of our sins. As the Lord says, *Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours*.

Would you like to know the third path of repentance? It is prayer: fervent prayer, sincere and focused prayer, prayer coming from the depths of the heart.

If you want to know the fourth path, I will tell you it is the giving of alms. It has great power.

And finally, if someone acts with modesty and humility, that path is no less effective as a way to deprive sin of its substance. Look at the publican, who had no good deeds to speak of. In place of good deeds he offered humility, and the huge burden of his sins fell away.

So now I have shown you the five paths of repentance. First, condemnation of sins. Second, forgiving the sins of those near us. Third, prayer. Fourth, almsgiving. Fifth, humility.

So do not be idle, but every day advance along all these paths at once.

- ❖ Paul gives us the second tool to use – humility. Taking Jesus as our model, we see that Jesus did not cling to his divinity. Humility was at the heart His ministry. Jesus, the Son of God does not insist on the fact that His divinity needs to be front and centre. He became one of us. How do you and I stack up against our model Jesus? Do we do all that we do for God's glory or are our actions motivated by our need to be appreciated, praised, thanked and recognised?
- ❖ Obedience Actions are more important than words. The son who says no and does what is asked of him is better than the one who says yes and does not obey. A sinner like a prostitute or a tax collector who obeys and turns back to God has more favour in God's eyes than a believer who just uses words and whose actions are quite the opposite.
- ❖ Let us learn to use all our energies to serve God, to seize each day and to show our commitment not just in words but in action. Let all be motivated by humility and obedience. Amen