

Sunday, October 1, 2023

#Homily by Father Karl Daigle

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A-2023

I cannot count the number of times that, after watching the news, I have turned away in disgust 🤢 with a heavy heart and a weary spirit.

After one episode of news indulgence, I began channel surfing and came across the classic show “Sanford and Son.” It had been years since I had watched this sitcom. I laughed, and I laughed, and I laughed. Within a short period of time, my mood was utterly transformed, and a new joy and peace flooded my soul. The message of St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians really came alive for me at that moment: “If there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

There is the old cliché, “You are what you eat.” Even more important than that, “We are what we think.” Regardless of our chronological age or level of sophistication, we are strongly influenced by what we fill our minds with and habitually dwell on, for better or for worse. Using the words of St. Paul again, if we are committed to thinking about and immersing ourselves in whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, and excellent, it increasingly becomes part of our character and the essence of “who” we are and “what” we are all about. Therefore, may we fill our minds with things such as religious and personal meditations and the beauty and grandeur of nature. May we fill it with types of music, movies, books, art, entertainment, and activities that renew and deepen our faith, hope, love, and passion for life and that continually activate our higher angels.

Speaking of angels, two classic television shows that bring out the best in me are “Highway To Heaven” and “Touched By An Angel.” They may be a little cheesy, but the touching stories about the love of God and others are permeated by a spirit of mission and service that sets my soul on fire. What does that do for you? How often do you turn to it to be renewed and inspired?

Despite the heavy, negative focus of the news and social media, there is so much good in the world, other people, and in ourselves that needs to be habitually savored and celebrated. If we consistently fill our minds with these good things, the scales gradually begin to fall from our eyes, and we are increasingly healed of our personal and spiritual blindness. With our growing 20/20 vision, we begin to see that the earth is still filled with the glory of God. We go beyond the sinfulness and brokenness of the world and see that God is alive and active, patiently striving to bring about his healing and saving work. We go beyond the limitations and idiosyncrasies of other people and see the unique way they are a manifestation of God’s wisdom, love, and amazing creativity. We go beyond our own self-criticism and even self-rejection and see that we, too, are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” We go beyond an “everything is black and white mentality” and compassionately begin to see the shades of gray and the complexity, contradictions, and ambiguity of life and other people, including ourselves. We experience the truth of the Scriptures “that where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.”

We can only discover this good news for ourselves if we allow ourselves “to be transformed through the renewal of our minds.” As we experience this reality, a spirit of thanksgiving will begin to bubble up from the deepest depths of our souls. It may begin as a tiny drop and gradually become a “fountain of living water” that fills us to overflowing. The overflow spills out toward others and invites and challenges them to become a person of gratitude. The thanksgiving that fills our souls may be expressed verbally or nurtured quietly in the depths of our hearts. It can also inspire us to “random acts of kindness” and a deep commitment to works of material or spiritual charity. We will find ourselves inspired to “pay it forward.”

At the beginning of my homily, I mentioned that watching Sanford and Son made me laugh and helped me move past the grief and anger that I was experiencing at that moment. By habitually filling our minds with things that are

good, true, and beautiful, we are also filled with new joy. It is natural for joy to spontaneously arise within us whenever we immerse ourselves in things that are wholesome and hopeful. It may even lead us to discover, re-discover, or deepen within our lives a spirit of laughter. We begin to see positive humor in other people and life situations that formerly went over our heads or we outright rejected because of our previous state of mind. We will come to laugh at ourselves in a way that heals and enlivens our spirit.

If we are thankful and joyful, humor and laughter will naturally be part of our lives, even though it will express itself with our own unique style and flair. And guess what? Being thankful and joyful does not have to be completely dependent on our life circumstances. It is all about our life and faith perspective. It is all about how we frame things in our minds and how we develop our capacity to view and respond to what life throws our way in a broad-minded and warm-hearted manner.

Inspired by the words of St. Paul, may we fill our minds with whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, and excellent. If we choose to do so, and the choice is ours, we can get ready for a whole new lease on life because of our brand-new perspective on living. It will be one of ever-unfolding integrity, discovery, and celebration that is thoroughly permeated by a spirit of joy and thanksgiving.

Did you know that the word Eucharist means “thanksgiving?” As we prepare for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, as we pray through it together, may we be filled with heartfelt gratitude to God for who He is, what He has done for us in the past, and what He continues to do for us in the present moment. God is truly deserving of all the love and thanksgiving we can offer Him at any given moment of our lives. And in return, He gives us the fullness of Himself, which fills us with a radiant spirit of joy, peace, and hope, along with a graced dose of humor and laughter.

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