

18th Sunday
8/2/2020

DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The day of my father's funeral was rather long. The funeral Mass at St. Thomas More Parish in south Kansas City wasn't until 1:00. From there we went to Mount Olivet Cemetery in Raytown and then returned to the retirement community where my mother lived for a meal. Eventually, guests left and my brother and I took our mother back to her room. We were ready to stay with her for awhile but she didn't want that. After all that had happened, she just wanted to be alone.

In today's gospel, Jesus has just learned about the death of John the Baptist and similar to my mother that day, you get the impressions he just wanted to be alone but for him that's not what happened. Instead there's a crowd of people waiting for him. Now it's important to pay attention to what Jesus says and does but it's also important to pay attention to what Jesus doesn't say or do.

Jesus didn't complain. He didn't berate the crowds. Jesus did not complain. If there's something that many of us do too much of, it's complaining. *It's so hot outside.* Well there's nothing anyone can do about the temperature. *You know what that person needs to do?* Well tell that person. In your complaining you may be right but is your complaining helpful? Is it being addressed to the right people?

And then there are those times when we not only complain, but continue to complain. At another parish I was at, there was an older outspoken woman and if she didn't like something, she would tell you to your face. But once she told you, she was ready to move on.

Someone who gave some excellent advice about complaining is St. Francis de Sales. He said, *Complain as little as possible about the wrongs you suffer because the one who complains everything a sin. Self-love feels that injuries are worse than they really are.*

Now this doesn't mean being passive in the face of abuse or injustice or things like that. If you are having chest pains, you need to talk about it. Sometimes we should or must speak out but sometimes it can be good to be quiet and we don't have

to tell the world every detail of what we have endured.

But St. Francis de Sales also realized something else. If you hold everything in all the time, you might explode. Sometimes we need a pressure valve; someone with whom we can talk, share our frustrations and even our complaints. I certainly need them in my life. Sometimes that can be healthy, but how we do it is important. St. Francis de Sales went on to say, *Above all, do not complain to irascible or fault-finding persons. If there is just occasion for complaining...do so to those who are even-tempered and really love God. Otherwise you find that those to whom you complain upset you still more, instead of calming you.*

So we recognize the danger of complaining but realize that when we have to do it, we do so the right way. Think what the world would be like if we could reduce our complaining by just fifty percent.

So we pay attention to what Jesus didn't do, complain *but* we also pay attention to what Jesus did. His concern for the sufferings of others was greater than his concern for his own sorrow. He was moved with pity for the crowds. He showed compassion. You could say he was conquered by compassion.

Perhaps you have been awoken in the middle of the night by a crying baby or a sick child, or a phone call from a friend who has an emergency. Usually we are disappointed because our sleep is disrupted, but hopefully we show pity and compassion as well. Jesus reaches out to sick and heals them but then he wants to give them something more. *Give them some food yourselves.* They had five loaves and two fish. Jesus then does something that should sound familiar. He take, blesses, breaks and gives. Jesus shares with others the generosity of God. Each reading today points to the generosity of God: Isaiah, Paul and the Gospel.

They brought the little that they had and then Jesus takes it from there. Jesus could have snapped his fingers and made more food appear but he chose to work through others and he continues to work through you and me. Many hungers: food, compassion, understanding, respect, equality, justice, and holiness. There are many types of hunger and there are many ways of feeding hunger. Our faith doesn't involve just what we say we believe, or the motions we go through, it includes how we live our lives and how we strive to our lives in big ways but also in every little way.

At Mass we share in Jesus' compassion for us as he continues to feed us with his word and with his body and blood under the form of bread and wine. As we are fed, so too may we seek to feed others.

There are two parts to maturity. The first is to do what needs to be done and the second is to not complain about it. Sometimes the second part can be more difficult than the first part. We find both of these in Jesus. He did what needed to be done, he took care of others and he didn't complain about it despite his sorrow. With lives of intentional faith, having been fed with Jesus himself in Eucharist, may we become more like Jesus. May we be conquered by compassion. May Jesus feed others through us.

Sometimes like my mother that day, we want to be left alone and it happens and sometimes as it was for Jesus, it doesn't happen but as we face both of those situations in life, may we too respond generously. May we do what needs to be done and not complain about it.