

Welcome, everyone, as we gather to celebrate this Eucharist. With today's gospel reading, we have begun to hear the gospel according to St. Luke, and will continue for the rest of Ordinary Time. But we've skipped a few chapters, because after his explanation to Theophilus about why he is writing down the gospel, he gives an account of the birth of Jesus, which we read during Christmas, and his baptism in the Jordan, which we read during Advent, and then his temptations in the desert, which we read during Lent.

So we skip ahead to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, and in today's gospel we hear Jesus' first homily. In this homily, he tells us exactly what his mission is. He gets right to it. He opens the scroll to Isaiah, finds the passage that speaks about the Messiah, and tells the people, "This passage is fulfilled in your hearing. I have come to bring 'good news' to those who suffer, to free those who are captive, to cure those who are blind - in a word, I have come to save you."

What a wonderful message. What good news! Our savior has come. But not everyone received it as good news back then, and there are still those today who do not receive it as good news. One of the most common errors that we experience in our culture is the mentality that makes us think we can respond to Jesus, "No thanks, I don't need a savior. I can save myself." Few things stunt our spiritual growth more than failing to recognize our need for a savior.

If we could save ourselves and achieve the fulfillment for which we long just by our own efforts, Jesus would not have come. The mere fact that Jesus came is evidence that we need him. None of us can live a complete and fulfilled life except by following him. It can be hard for us to accept this truth - even us Catholics, who really should know better. We have all been infected, to some extent, with the modern mentality that we need to do things for ourselves, that we shouldn't put ourselves in a situation where we need someone else to help us, that we should be the center of our own lives and free to direct it however we see fit.

The problem is, that's not the way God designed us. We are made to be social, interdependent beings. We are not made to be self-centered. And we recognize that even in the term. If someone calls you self-centered, you don't take it as a compliment, and it's not meant as one. It means everything you do, everything you say, everything you think is through the prism of yourself, how does this relate to me, how does this affect me. But none of us was meant to be the center of our own lives. God is the center. Christ is the Lord, the Savior, the center of our lives.

And so, if we want to live a life of fulfillment, we have to acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves, and that Christ is our savior. But how? What does that look like? We hear the answer in today's Psalm: "The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the

simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.”

We learn to let Jesus be our savior from the law of the Lord, from the decree of the Lord, from the precepts of the Lord, from the command of the Lord. Those four words are summed up in one: the will of God. Following God's will in our life unleashes his saving power; we let him be our Savior by seeking and embracing God's will. Jesus taught us this in the prayer that he gave us: thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

What is God's will? God's will is the Ten Commandments; God's will is the commandment to love your neighbor as your self; God's will is found in the deposit of faith as guarded by the Catholic Church; God's will is heard in the voice of a well-formed conscience; God's will is that we are faithful to the duties of our state in life – our vocation. The commandments, Church teaching, conscience, our responsibilities: that's where we find God's will. That's where we find happiness and fulfillment. And that is what we teach at Notre Dame Academy. Today we begin Catholic Schools Week, and I would like to take a moment to speak about the value of Catholic education.

Now, going to Catholic school will not make you a saint. Ask any parent here whose child goes to Catholic school and they will confirm that. It will not

guarantee that you will grow up to be a good person. It won't even guarantee that you won't fall away from the faith. There are plenty of grandparents here right now who could say, "I don't understand. I paid to have my child spend twelve years in Catholic school and now he never goes to church," so I'm not going to stand here and say, "Send your kids to Notre Dame Academy, and we'll make sure they fall in love with Jesus." I can't promise you that.

But I do promise you that if you send your kids to Notre Dame Academy, they will hear the truth. They will learn that their faith is a precious gift, and it is beautiful. They will learn that there is right, and there is wrong, and that we are not the ones who decide which is which. They will learn that God loves them, that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save them, and that they can always go to Him in their joys and in their sorrows, and He will hear them. And they will hear this message five days a week from their teacher, the staff, their principal and their priests. Whether they choose to grow up and live what they have learned will be up to them, just as it is up to each of us. But they will have heard the truth.

This education is available to anyone who wants it. As I've said before, we do our best not to turn anyone away for financial reasons. If you want this for your child, you can have it; if you are willing to sacrifice what you can to support the school, we have a place for you. And finally, I want to thank all of you for supporting our

school, especially those whose children have grown. The simple fact is: there would be no Catholic schools without you. Thank you for your support of Catholic education. May God bless us, may He bless our children, and may He bless our school.