

Welcome, everyone, as we gather to celebrate this Eucharist. A special welcome to those who are visiting us here today – we are very happy to join with you in worship of our heavenly Father.

There are certain moments in life that are really important, that you remember for the rest of your life. One of those days for me was the day that the idea of the possibility of my being called to the priesthood entered my head. I've mentioned this before, but just briefly: I was about twelve years old, and I was sitting in the pew at St. Olaf's church with my family, and Fr. Michael Byron was giving the homily. I honestly can't remember what it was he said. Whatever it was, in my little brain, I remember suddenly thinking, "I think God might want me to be a priest." And of course, like most twelve-year olds probably would, I said to myself, "Yeah, right. No thank you." As you can see, God didn't accept that as my final answer.

Being a priest did not sound like a good idea to me. I naively thought, (and remember, I was twelve years old) that being a husband and father would be a lot easier and demand a lot less sacrifice than being a priest. Most of my friends are married with children, and if I ever suggested to them that they don't sacrifice as much as priests do, they would laugh at me and offer to let me baby-sit their kids for a week while they go on vacation. No, there are plenty of sacrifices in every vocation. But second of all, when I first heard the call to the priesthood, I thought

that a life of sacrifice would not be a life of happiness. To be happy meant to not have to sacrifice, to be comfortable, secure, and free to do whatever I wanted to do.

I mention this because I think the apostles may have had a similar understanding of happiness and sacrifice in today's gospel. We can imagine how Jesus' heart must have fallen when he realized what his apostles were discussing on the road. Listen again to St. Mark: "They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest."

How disappointed Christ must have been. He had just explained to them that he, their Lord, must empty himself on the cross, suffer humiliation and death at our hands, and then be raised from the dead after three days. As his followers, one would hope they would be discussing how to best follow that example, how they too could empty themselves for the sake of others. But instead, it was as if they hadn't even heard him. Instead, they were talking about who was the greatest among them, not in the eyes of God, but in the eyes of the world.

How Jesus' heart must have fallen. These were his closest friends, and yet consider what a sad state they were in. Because it is a sad state of life to be in when we are consumed with our own well-being, our own desires, our own status

in the eyes of the world, and thinking that that is where our happiness lies. We have probably all encountered people who live like this. Every little demand that someone else makes on their day is seen as an affront, as an imposition. Every little inconvenience to themselves is met with hostility and impatience because things aren't going the way they had planned, and don't people know they have important things to do. Every word or deed by someone else is always viewed through the lens of "how does that affect me, what are the consequences in my life because of what they are doing." When every sacrifice they are asked to make is seen not as an opportunity to follow the example of our Lord and serve, but rather as a burden.

We have all met people like this. Perhaps we even recognize ourselves in this. It is a sad state, because there is no happiness in a world where we are the center. How small and lifeless such a world would be, one where our will is most important. How much better for us to realize that we are not the most important thing in the world. Our Lord is, and we are called to serve Him.

You may have seen on the cover of the bulletin last week that we have purchased a subscription to formed.org. It is a treasure trove of Catholic resources, including materials to prepare for each Sunday. You all have access to those materials, and I encourage you to use them to better prepare for each Sunday Mass – you can go to our website for the link. For this Sunday, one question to reflect upon is: Who are

the people you encounter in your everyday life? Your family, your friends, your coworkers. How can you think of these people as an integral part of your growth in holiness?

Every person you encounter this week will be an opportunity for you to serve in some way, to live your faith. We are called to be faithful to the role that God has given us to play in the redemption of the world, and embrace the sacrifices that that demands of us. We are called to be faithful to His command to empty ourselves just as he emptied himself, and put the needs of others before our own. We are called to be faithful to the path that our Lord is leading us on, the path to the cross, and to resurrection.

The day that the apostles realized this was a momentous day, one that they never forgot afterwards. And it changed them, changed them forever, once they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and started living for our Lord rather than themselves, and experienced the joy that comes from living for others. Our happiness does not lie in doing our own will, but in sacrificing our will for the heavenly Father's. Let us never forget that, and let us devote our time to discerning our Lord's will for us, how He wants us to empty ourselves for Him, and then embrace those sacrifices that will lead us to fulfillment.