

Homily for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday, August 12, 2018
Deacon Nick Thompson

In 1961 I was 10 years old. I still remember sitting on the couch with my parents and hearing John Fitzgerald Kennedy the first and only Catholic President give his inaugural address. “Ask not what your country can do for you rather ask what you can do for your country?” Even at 10 the words immediately had an impact on my life. Now I’m 67 and lately I find myself surrounded by a world that first asks: What is in it for me? Life of course is all about satisfying me, myself and I, right! I mean, if I don’t gain some benefit from it or the return on my investment doesn’t make a profit certainly you don’t expect me to participate. It’s much easier to murmur to gripe and moan and whine about the state of current affairs than it is to do something about them. Besides my doing something is probably not going to make a bit of difference. Sacrifice without expectation; honor without glory; taking into consideration the good of future generations; doing our best simply because it’s the right thing to do; virtues in general seem to be disappearing in our society.

This is not a new phenomenon in the history of mankind. Paul spoke to the first-generation Christians in Ephesus about their lapse in virtue. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with which you were

sealed for the day of Redemption.” Apparently, the Ephesians were acting out in bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, reviling, and acting with malice towards their leaders in local government. They were being persecuted for their Christian beliefs. They were asking the Holy Spirit to come down and do something about their crises in civil authority. The situation in fact sounds somehow familiar to me. My wife’s boss asked her why the church just didn’t come out and tell us who to vote for. She of course is the deacon’s wife and so he felt she may have some influence in these church decisions. Paul advises the Ephesians, “be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.” This advice doesn’t sound like we should be saying: What’s in it for me or why can’t the church just make being responsible easy. It doesn’t sound like murmurs, gripes, and whines are the way to go. Perhaps rather than asking the church to just tell us who to vote for we should begin now researching the candidates, putting in the work it takes to make the right choice based on our knowledge of the Catholic virtues of the candidate. Using our ability to gain knowledge and making a well-informed choice based on our free will sounds like the way to go here.

Paul goes on to say, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma. Somehow this doesn’t

sound like a me, myself and I piece of advice. We pray for God to give us good leaders. But we fail to make the investment to find out which of the choices is the one he gave us. We ask God to give us teachers for our children but fail to learn enough to become teachers. We ask God to provide social service ministers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, ushers, altar servers then we ask what's in it for me or we say my time is too valuable to be used doing that. I'm just too busy. When someone does volunteer we stand with the Jews who murmured. I'm not receiving Eucharist from that person. Why is he reading? You can't hardly understand his accent. Look at what that altar server is doing. We fail to become part of the body of Christ and so we fail to be taught by God. We fail to listen and thus fail to hear because our own murmurs prevent us from hearing and participating. We are still standing with the Israelites in the desert asking what this manna stuff is and whining about a meat supplement?

The Jews didn't listen then and we are sometimes hard of hearing now. Let's face it rather than giving off a fragrant aroma sometimes we just stink. But Christ offered them and us the bread of life, the opportunity as believers to celebrate eternal life. He gave his flesh for the life of the world and guaranteed that everyone who listens to his Father and learns from him comes to the bread of life. We are here. We have come. Lord let us stop our murmuring so that we may hear.

Today is donut Sunday. Over in the Parish Life Center after Mass we will gather with our parish community; meet some new friends; have a free donut; let the kids eat their fill of donut holes and relax. Don't feel like you're not invited all are invited visitor, old, and new parishioner alike. Today is a particularly important day. Let me warn you however that if you choose to come to the Parish Life Center, there is a price for the donuts, today you will discover the Festival of Ministries. Our St Edward community will be providing you with a whole myriad of opportunities to serve our parish community, to serve our Father in Heaven. It is an opportunity for all of us to stand with our faith community and in appreciation for the bread of life "Ask not what your God can do for you rather ask what you can do for your God?" And please no murmuring on your way to the free donuts.