

## HOMILY for 12<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel wants to discuss with us about life in Heaven. As I reflect on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A man dies & goes to Heaven where St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter says, "You need 1,000 points to make it into Heaven. Now, tell me all of the good things you've done, & give you a certain number of points for each item. When you reach 1,000 points, you may get it."

"Okay," the man says, "I was happily married to the same woman for fifty years and never cheated on her, not even in my mind."

"That's wonderful," says St. Peter, "that's worth two points!"

"Two points?" he says. "Well, I attended church all my life & gave my ten percent tithe faithfully."

"Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's definitely worth a point."

"One point? My goodness! Well, what about this: I started a soup kitchen in my city & cooked in a shelter for the homeless?"

"Fantastic, that's good for 2 more points," he says.

"Two points?" the man cries. "At this rate, the only way I can get into Heaven is by the Grace of God!"

"Now that's what we're looking for! Come on in!"

Anyway, for us Christians, one of our top concerns is the salvation of our souls & how to get through the Gates of Heaven in case you don't know it yet. From the moment of waking up in the morning to the time we lay down to rest in the evening, our heart is filled with worries. We're worried about what to eat & drink & how our health might be like throughout the day. We're also concerned about the roof over our heads & the need of our families & friends. Certainly we have other worries that come up every day for us to call on God for help. It's natural for us to have worries about our lives & the needs of people around us because it means that we care about those things. Thankfully, we have a caring & compassionate God who would readily be there to give us a helping hand when we're stressed out & in need of help. Today's Gospel lets us know on how Jesus feels about our daily worries & what He would do about it. Here's Jesus' reaction to our daily worries: "Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet, not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted; so do not be afraid of anything. You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows."

Now we know how Jesus feels about us & our daily worries. First, He wants us to know that we are worth more than the hair of our head or a single sparrow. If God has already kept track of our hair & all the creatures on earth including a sparrow, we can rest assured that God would not let our daily problems overwhelm & crush us. God would find ways to help us deal with those problems & show us how to reduce our daily worries. After all, we're worth more than any creature on earth. Here I'd like to make a quick comment concerning the value of a human life compared to the one of a pet. One important lesson about Western culture that I was reminded before my arrival to the USA is that pets are highly adored & greatly treated in America. In fact, most pets are valued more than a man. That is why the Holy Father recently tried to remind the Italian society that they should not put the adoption of a pet above the one

of a child or a human being. He probably has come to that conclusion based on Jesus' consideration of the high value of a human life in today's Gospel. If our Western society can figure out the great value of a human life, then I believe that it can reduce the number of senseless violence & random killings happening in the world right now. Furthermore, that revelation of the high value of a human life could also help our world reduce the steady rising number of suicides lately & lift up the human spirit amidst its daily challenges.

In addition to helping us see our self-worth in the eyes of God, today's Gospel wants to remind us to get our house in order so that we can stand tall before the Judgment seat of God on the Last Day. As I said at the beginning of this Homily, one of the biggest worries for us should be if we would be saved & our souls would make it through the Gate of Heaven after this life. For the longest time that we can live on earth would be one hundred years, but eternity is a serious matter for us to consider where our souls might end up. If we can get through the Gate of Heaven safely, then eternity is a blessing for us. But, if we end up in the miserable place of Hell, then eternity should be a concern for us. That is why Jesus wants us to pause for a moment today & get our priorities straight. He said in today's Gospel, "Fear no one... Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul & body in Gehenna... Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Heavenly Father. But, whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my Heavenly Father." So, Jesus wants us to be concerned about our relationship with God & not with the authority here on earth. For the earthly authority can do harm to our body, but God can condemn both of our body & soul for eternity.

Sometimes we feel that bad people are thriving in this life while good people seem to suffer one bad thing after another. Evil folks look like they could get away with their mean & evil acts. That is what prophet Jeremiah complained about in today's First Reading: "... I hear the whispering of many: 'Terror on every side! Denounce! Let us denounce him!' All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine. 'Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, & take our vengeance on him.' But, the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. In their failure, they will be put to utter shame, to lasting, unforgettable confusion." So, prophet Jeremiah evidently did not only see evil folks thrive but also experienced how horrible they treated him. Even his friends abandoned him & sided with the evil folks to wish bad things happen to him. It's heartbreaking to witness good people suffering while evil folks continue their bad ways of life without consequences. But, prophet Jeremiah wants to remind us that we can count on our faithful, loving God because He will not abandon or betray us. He will be there for us to protect us & hold everyone accountable for one's actions. Hence, we should not be too worried about evil folks or quite stressed out about all the bad things happen around the world right now. For God is in control & going to let us know about the divine plan for the world soon.

My dear brothers & sisters, as long as we're still here on earth, we will never be free from our daily worries. But, in today's Gospel, Jesus wants to remind us that we should be worried the most about how we might look to God the Father on the Last Day. So, we got to live according to God's Commandments so that God will acknowledge us on the Last Day. Moreover, God will help us take care of our daily worries in this life.