

Father O'Connor's Homily for 29 September 2024
Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time-B
Stewardship Commitment Weekend Two: Lay Ministry Video

Numbers 11: 25-29

James 5: 1-6

Mark 9: 38-43, 47-48

In the Scriptures each week of the year, we hear about how the Lord is calling each of us to continually grow as His disciples.

Stewardship as a way of life is all about becoming even better disciples of Jesus.

And this weekend is our second of three Sundays for our Annual Stewardship Renewal, with its theme, "A Place to Belong."

I hope that you received your stewardship packet in the mail. If not, there are packets in white envelopes – specially marked for each parish – in the doorways of the church. Each packet contains: (1) a letter from me; (2) a "Ministries Catalog" which describes each of the current ministries in our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes; and most of the ministries are available for members of both of our parishes to participate in; (3) and a "2024 Commitment Card" specially marked for each parish that enables each household to check-off ministry involvements that they would like to renew for another year or that they would like to join for one year.

Next weekend is our annual Commitment Sunday. You are asked to bring your completed commitment cards to Mass with your one-year commitments of your time, talent and treasure. And we will place them in the Offertory basket together.

You can also find, on our parish website, a "Ministries Catalog" and commitment cards for each parish. Just go to the parish website and, on the home page, click on "Annual Stewardship Renewal."

On this same web-page you can access our brand-new ten-minute "2024 Stewardship Video" – produced and directed by Christina Dupre – with fellow parishioners showcasing the many ministries that are available for our participation and for our benefit.

So let's watch it now together as we prepare to make our ministry decisions for Commitment Sunday next weekend.

And now, a reflection on today's Gospel.

Walt Disney was known to be a ruthless editor. He felt that if something in the filming got in the way of the story's flow it should be cut out – no matter how funny or beautiful the scene was.

Good writers tell us that to produce a fine piece of literature you have to do lots of editing. Pieces of writing are effective largely because of what was cut out – so that only the best remains.

If we think of our lives as the story that God dreams for us, what needs to be edited right now so that the stories of our lives can flow as God intends?

In today's Gospel, Jesus offers some very graphic illustrations to make His point. He uses a technique called *hyperbole*: an extreme exaggeration to teach a lesson so that it can't be missed.

Jesus says, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better to enter the Kingdom of God with one hand or one foot or one eye than to enter the fires of Gehenna – the fires of hell – with all of your members intact."

We do get the point! What needs to be edited in each of our lives so the story can flow smoothly? Sometimes the difference between a mess and a masterpiece lies in what is eliminated.

The first place we would look for editing out is the sin in our lives. It becomes a part of us. And it can get in the way.

There's an old rhyme that goes:

"Knock-knock."

"Who's there?" I said.

"A little lonely sin."

"Enter," I said.

And then all hell broke in.

People will sometimes admit that there was a sin that they gave into years ago that has had a controlling effect on them to this day. And they finally realized that, to root it out, they needed to have a daily plan.

There was a woman on a plane years ago when gourmet airline dinners actually existed. She got her meal and immediately sprinkled salt and pepper on the chocolate cake that was on her tray for dessert. The flight attendant said, "What are you doing? That's not necessary!" And the woman answered, "Oh yes, it is. Otherwise I just might eat it!"

We have to have a plan for eliminating the sin in our lives. And the Sacrament of Penance is an enormous help. [We have an opportunity to celebrate this sacrament at Saint Joseph every Thursday evening following the 7:00 PM Mass until 8:30 PM, and every Saturday morning from 11:00 AM until 12:00 Noon.]

Second, our relationships in life sometimes need editing. We need to look at them regularly and be sure that we are living according to our priorities.

A wife complained that her husband was involved in everything. She wished he would stay home once in a while to be with her and their children. One day she was exasperated and threatened to have these words engraved on his tombstone: “He never missed a meeting!”

What would people who love you tell you about the schedule that you keep? Do they want more of your time and attention? If they had control of your personal calendar, what would they edit out? And what would they add?

The third area that might need some editing is our relationship with God. What place do I give God in my life? Well, you might say, “I’m here at Mass right now, on this Sunday morning.” And I’m glad you are, and I commend you for this! But what about the other six days?

What part of your daily life do you commit to prayer? I’m afraid sometimes that if we gave our human friends the same amount of time and attention that we give to God each week, our human friendships would not survive.

God has offered us a relationship with Himself. How do I respond to this relationship with the way that I use the gift of time?

The Gospel today sounds pretty harsh – cutting off things. But the point is well-made. Jesus wants the story of our life to flow from beginning to end according to God’s dream for us. So what in our lives needs some editing right now: in terms of sin, in terms of our relationships with others, and in terms of our relationship with God?

“Cutting off” may seem to be a strange thing to be talking about as we make our plans for this Annual Stewardship Renewal. But not really. We may be “cutting off” some self-serving things in order to be “making more room” for God and for others.

When we allow God to be our editor-in-chief, God can turn the story of our lives from being a mess into becoming a masterpiece. And, with His grace, to enable us to live “happily ever after” in the kingdom of heaven.

So how will we each spend our gifts of time, talent and treasure over the next 12 months? We have this week to decide. Let’s keep each other in prayer as we do so.