



## Sample Homily

### Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

#### October 10, 2021

#### Talking Points / Outline

1. Recap of the purpose of Beacons of Light.
2. Recognition of the emotions that people may be experiencing.
3. Today's Gospel provides three very practical lessons to help us through this time of difficulty and transition
  - a. "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor"
    - i. Are we being asked to give up everything from our past, even the prized possession of our parish?
    - ii. We are not being asked to abandon or "sell" our past, but to join with our neighbors
  - b. "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."
    - i. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."
    - ii. The current state of our parishes may seem impossible to strengthen.
    - iii. The goal of Beacons of Light is to form parishes that radiate Christ
    - iv. "All things are possible for God."
  - c. Those who give all for the sake of the kingdom will "receive a hundred times more now and in the age to come."
    - i. It seems that we are being asked to give up everything.
    - ii. But every sacrifice made for the sake of the kingdom will be rewarded.
    - iii. God cannot be outdone in generosity.
    - iv. Pain and sacrifice will be temporary, but the blessings will be eternal.

## Homily

Sometimes it is difficult to apply the Gospel that we hear at our Sunday liturgies to our daily lives. The message can be ambiguous and might not have a very practical application to daily living.

But I am amazed at how often the Gospel provides us with a lesson that speaks directly to our current reality. I believe that today is one of those days.

The Archdiocese has announced the new Families of Parishes in conjunction with the Beacons of Light project. These Families will be led by one pastor and one or more parochial vicars (other priests assigned to the Family). These Families will ultimately become one parish, a merging of the people, talents, gifts, and resources of several parishes.

At a time of significant change such as this, many people – and that includes priests, deacons, religious, and laity alike – may be experiencing any of a multitude of emotions over the future of their parish. Anger, fear, grief, resentment, and uncertainty may arise, but so too might relief, enthusiasm, gratitude, and excitement. All of these are possible responses to the news of our new Family of Parishes.

In today's Gospel, Jesus provides us with **three very practical lessons** that seem to apply to our current circumstance.

In the first encounter of today's Gospel, Jesus is approached by a man who seeks guidance on how he can inherit eternal life. When Jesus tells him that he must "go, sell what you have, and give to the poor", the man walks away dejected, because he had many possessions. It was going to be hard for him to part with that to which he had become so attached throughout his life.

Perhaps we are sad about the impending grouping of our parishes because, in a sense, we are being asked to "give up" our possessions, which have been a part of our lives for so long, perhaps many generations. Of course, these are not OUR possessions, but still we have developed an attachment to and an affection for our home parish and all that is there. The message of today's Gospel is perhaps a harsh one, just as it was for the man to whom Jesus was speaking. To be willing to detach ourselves from the material dimensions in our lives in order to truly follow the Lord is certainly difficult. In our present situation, we are not being called to abandon our parish but to come together with neighboring brothers and sisters. Perhaps in that sense of community, fraternity and accompaniment, our sadness might be tempered and the joy of new beginnings may flourish.

In the second interaction with Jesus in the Gospel today, the disciples were amazed when Jesus said, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man

to enter the Kingdom of God." They questioned him: "Who then can be saved?" A valid question, to be sure! And Jesus, in his infinite wisdom, replies "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

We might have a similar kind of question for God in regard to the parish announcements for Beacons of Light. "Who then can be saved?" might be for us "Can my parish really change?" And the answer is, of course, a resounding "YES!". The purpose of Beacons of Light is to form parishes that radiate Christ! All things are possible for God!

The parishes that make up the Archdiocese of Cincinnati are in declining health. Over the past 10 years, attendance at Mass has decreased by 22%, baptisms have declined by 19%, and Catholic weddings have decreased by 28%. And although we have seen an increase in the number of men entering our seminary, the number of ordinations is not keeping up with the number of priests retiring and dying. So there are fewer priests available to serve our parishes. All of these "symptoms" lead to a diagnosis that something has to be done. So it is to our Lord that we turn, looking for healing and new life. We should be comforted by those words spoken by Christ in the Gospel: "All things are possible for God."

Then there is the third and final lesson presented by Jesus in today's Gospel. "Amen I say to you, there is no one who gives up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and that of the Gospel, who will not receive a hundred times more now and in the age to come." Does this sound like what we are being asked to do? To give up so much of our past? Our family. Our house of worship. Our land. It may seem so. Jesus' words should provide comfort and peace for us as we embrace these changes, that we will receive a hundred times more in spiritual and eternal rewards because of our sacrifice for His sake and that of the Gospel. God cannot be outdone in generosity. The Gospel MUST continue to be preached. It WILL continue to be preached in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for generations to come. But to accomplish that, we must make our parishes stronger and more vibrant. That will require some short-term pain and sacrifice now, but there will be abundant blessings in the years to come.

In these times of transition, our confidence remains in Christ Jesus, as we recall the words in today's Gospel which he spoke to his disciples: "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."