

Homily -- 22nd Sunday OT; B-cycle

A young boy sat on the front porch of a farmhouse with his grandfather.

They heard a car coming down the seldom traveled dirt road passing close by.

When the driver of the car, bearing out of state plates saw them on the front porch, he stopped to ask directions to the nearby town.

After getting directions, the driver started back toward his car.

After walking only a few steps though, he hesitated, and turned around again.

Then he awkwardly asked, "Say mister, what are folks like around here?"

"Why do you ask?" The old man responded.

The man said, "I just left a town where the people were the biggest bunch of snobs! I've never been around less friendly people in my life.

"I lived in that town for over a year, and never felt like part of the community."

The old man sighed and said, "Guess that's how you'll find folks round here too."

The stranger said his good-bye's and walked away. The boy looked at his grandfather a bit puzzled, but said nothing.

A few hours later, another car stopped in front of the farmhouse where the two were still sitting.

The driver, with a big smile on her face, strolled briskly up the front walk and asked directions to the same town.

After carefully writing down the directions, she said, "Sir, can you tell me what the people are like around here!" The old man said, "Why do you ask?"

The woman answered smiling broadly, "Oh, you see, I'm moving from one of the nicest little towns you could ever ask for.

"The people made me feel so much at home, and everyone was so friendly.

I felt I had lived there all my life."

"Well," the old man said, "you'll find folks 'round here, pretty much the same."

The woman got in her car and drove off, and boy looked puzzled once again at his grandfather.

He asked, "Grandpa, why did you give those people different answers to the same

question?”

The grandfather put his hand on the boys shoulder and said, “it’s a person’s attitude that determines how people will respond to them.

“Folks everywhere are pretty much the same.”

Attitude determines response. Years ago, I was watching 60 Minutes with my Dad, and one of the stories was about a program in NY, that helped people on welfare, get into into permanent job placements.

The classes are strict, almost militant, and about half the people who start the program don’t finish. They showed the first day of class.

The instructor asked, “How many people here feel they have some small degree of intelligence?” Everyone raised a hand except this one young man.

The instructor singled him out and said, “Why didn’t you raise your hand?”

He shrugged but said nothing.

And after prodding him a few minutes, the young man finally responded, “I didn’t feel like it.”

And the instructor said, “You’ll never get a job,” and kicked him out.

And then he said to the class, “You can all have all the qualifications necessary for a job, but if you have a bad attitude you’ll never keep a job.”

Attitude determines response. This is true not only in the world but also in spirituality.

Spiritually speaking, some of us are going to work with bad attitudes.

Ever worked with someone who hated their job? Aren’t they miserable?

And don’t they tend to make everyone around them miserable?!

Spiritually some people are like that. Always come to church late.

Always leave early. Won’t support the parish. Won’t get involved.

The attitude is basically, ‘just tell me how much I can get away with, and still go to heaven.’ They shoot for minimum requirements.

It cannot be this way. If we think it can be this way we’re lying to ourselves.

That isn't MY conclusion. That's Saint James conclusion; "*Humbly welcome the word that has taken root in you, with its power to save you. Act on this word. If all you do is listen to it, you are deceiving yourselves.*"

Saint James is saying that we need to have good attitudes.

And our attitudes here, will determine how God responds to us later.

Catholicism is more than just a bunch of stylized ceremonies.

It's more than just going through some ritualistic requirements.

Catholicism is an attitude. It's a way of looking at things. It's a way of behaving.

It's a way of believing. It's a way of responding to life. It's a way of acting.

We receive God's word in scripture to learn how we should act while we are living in the world, and we receive the Eucharist, his body and blood to give us the strength to act that way while we are in the world.

Every now and then someone comes for a sponsor certificate to be a godparent.

Are you registered here? No. Do you go to Church? No. Are you married in the Church? No. Well, I'm sorry but I can't give you a sponsor certificate.

"What do you mean I can't be a godparent?!" They get indignant and storm out.

That's usually followed an hour later by a flood of phone calls amid shouting and sobbing; Mom calls, Dad calls, aunts, uncles, grandparents call.

In fact everybody but the baby calls, and I make my all too familiar trek to get to my supply of extra strength Tylenol.

I don't understand this. If I hung a shingle out on the rectory that said Father Michael Sisco MD, I think the American Health Association would have something to say.

Would I have any right to be indignant if the American Health Association said to me "you can't put up that sign! You can't practice medicine!"

What do you mean? This is America. I can do what I want!

That's true to an extent, but to protect the health and well being of people seeking medical attention, one must prove they are qualified to practice medicine.

That means being certified by people who are known to be professionals in the medical sciences. That's so obvious when we're talking medicine.

Why don't people see that spiritually, the same is true of a godparent.
One must be qualified to safeguard the oversight of a child's spiritual training.
Being a Godparent is a privilege of a practicing Catholic, not just an honorary
title bestowed by the parents.
But sadly, most people don't see a godparent as a spiritual mentor anymore.
Most people don't see the enormous responsibility a godparent has to help raise
a child in the faith.
They don't see that God has entrusted a soul to their care.

That's why Jesus blasted the Pharisee's so badly this week.
They were going through motions without meaning.
They reduced the covenant to stylized rituals, but their hearts were not with God.
They didn't care about the welfare of those less fortunate.
They weren't interested in attaining any real spiritual depth in their relationship
with God. They were just meeting the minimum requirements.
Their attitudes dictated their response to God, and their attitudes would dictate
God's response to them.

My brothers and sisters it is my prayer for all of us today, that we truly seek a good
spiritual attitude in our lives, so our response to others will be as favorable as God's
response to us.