

Homily—33rd Sunday OT; B-cycle

“Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches become tender and sprout leaves you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these happening know that he is near, at the gates....But of that day or hour no one knows.”

Every now and then someone comes up with another prediction or prophecy about when the end of the world will take place; the Mayan Calendar, the millennium Y2K, the Hale Bop comet.

I think there have been a dozen or more end of the world predictions in my lifetime alone, and they all have one thing in common; they’ve all been wrong!

Why are people so obsessed with when the end of the world will be?

I have a theory...maybe people are so anxious and afraid of when the kingdom of God will arrive in the future, because they fail to see the kingdom of God all around them right now.

People are too busy, or too distracted, or too obsessed with worldly things to try seeing the kingdom of God in the here and now, so of course when Jesus arrives in glory on some future day, it will catch us all by surprise.

Starbucks isn’t printing Christmas symbols on their coffee cups this December.

Instead they’re going with a generic red cup.

Those snobbish, yuppie, coffee sipping, commie sympathizing jerks!!

And now people of good moral fiber have kicked off a campaign to boycott Starbucks!

REALLY!? This is an issue? We REALLY care that Starbucks isn’t printing pictures of frosty the snowman, kids on sleds, and pretty snowflakes on their coffee cups SOOOOOO much, that people are actually boycotting them?

Honestly, I don’t drink Starbucks just because I never liked the taste, and I always thought it was grossly overpriced. I’m a Dunkin Donuts man myself.

And Starbucks has taken a few political stands that in *my* opinion WARRANT a boycott, like their support of Planned Parenthood.

If you want to boycott Starbucks, boycott them for THAT, not this. This is just silly.

But we’ve GOT to keep Christ in Christmas!! Amen! Yes we do!

So *keep* Christ in Christmas! Feed the hungry, cloth the naked, shelter the homeless,

take care of the sick and the elderly, visit the imprisoned, promise God you'll go to Church every week, instead of just being an occasional visitor, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The best way to keep Christ in Christmas is by living how he asked us to live.

In my opinion that's the ONLY way to keep Christ in Christmas, because that is the kingdom of God in the here and now. That's the kingdom of God around us.

I think the year 2015 will go down in history as the year we got offended at everything.

Everybody is offended at something and everybody is afraid of standing up for what's morally right because we might offend someone else.

It's like the whole nation is just itching to pick with a fight with each other.

And we wonder why we're anxious over the coming of the kingdom of God! DUH!!

How can we possibly embrace the kingdom of God with attitudes like that?

If we want to be able to embrace the coming of the kingdom, we have to change our attitude. How do we do that?

An Axiom is a law that cannot be changed.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has formulated ten Axioms for himself; ten personal laws, that guides the way he lives his life. *The first is don't gossip.*

Short of killing someone, gossip is about the worst thing we can do to another person; because you may not be killing their body, but you're killing their reputation.

You're encouraging other people not to like that person, and as that spreads, you can also kill their dreams, their spirit, their hopes.

Pope Francis' second axiom, is finish your meals... in other words, be grateful for what you've got. Many people in the world go hungry. Many people don't have the basic necessities to live.

Take time to thank God every day for everything that God has given you, because if you do, you'll stop worrying about things that you don't have.

Pope Francis' third axiom; make time for others.

You know it becomes so easy for us to get lost in our own little world of gadgets; the computers, smart phones, tablets, i-pods, game stations.

The toys are fun but they're never going to help us develop as human beings.
The problem with the gadgets is that they get us to retreat inside ourselves, and God
wants us to be reaching out and forming relationships with other people.

The Pope's fourth axiom is choose the more humble purchase.

Don't always get the best, most expensive things for yourselves.

Learn to be satisfied with simple things, and the simple pleasures of life.

His fifth axiom is meet the poor in the flesh. During Pope Francis' visit to our country, he was
scheduled for a luncheon with the President and a bunch of diplomats and he blew them off!

Instead he went to have lunch with a group of humble nuns, the little sisters of the poor,
and the poor people that the sisters take care of.

It's one thing to throw money at a good cause, but when you can attach a face to that
cause, that helps us to grow in love, and love brings us closer to God.

And growing in love inspires us to be more charitable, and makes us grateful for what we
have, instead of always looking at what we don't have.

The Pope's sixth axiom; stop judging others! We all have baggage! None of us is perfect!

Stop looking for reasons to find fault with others. Learn to be patient.

*His seventh axiom is befriend those who disagree with you. **Why should I do that?***

Because maybe THEY'RE right and I'M wrong! I'm not deluded!

I know I don't have all the answers! I have a few advisory boards in the parish; the
finance committee, the parish council, and the school committee.

Why do I hold these meetings? Because I was trained in seminary to be a spiritual leader.

But I soon learned a pastor also has to be a lawyer, a realtor, an accountant, an engineer,
and a corporate middle manager. These are not my areas of expertise.

So I have these committees to advise me, so I can make informed decisions that are in the
best interest of the parish.

Spiritually speaking, doing this will help you learn to listen to other people, and respect
others opinions, and that will also help you see the value in all people.

The Pope's 8th axiom, is make commitments, such as marriage, or priesthood or religious life.

Why? Because all those commitments require sacrifice.

All those vocations involve giving of yourself for the good of someone else.

I have to make sacrifices for the parish, a religious has to make sacrifices for the good of his or her community, and parents have to make sacrifices for the good of their spouses and their children; and that increases humility.

Pope Francis' ninth axiom is make it a habit to ask the Lord. Consult God in all your decisions.

That will make you a prayerful person, and that will make you less anxious about the choices that you make.

But that also means you need to making the time to pray, AND come to Mass.

Because the only reason our prayers CAN be heard is because they are offered up with the sacrifice of the Mass.

And finally, the Pope's last rule of life is be happy. This is just as important as the other nine.

Everyone likes a happy person. People gravitate to a happy person.

Being a happy person will allow us to affect others for the better.

God wants us to be happy. He didn't make us to go through life sad.

Now sad things will happen, but that doesn't mean you can't be a happy person, because happy people are people who know God made them to be just what they are.

Happy people know the hand of God is in control EVEN in the sad times.

And happy people know they don't have to prove their worth to anyone, because they know their self-worth, because they see their worth through the eyes of God and don't measure their worth by the opinions of other people.

Good rules of living from our Holy Father in Rome.

Follow these axioms and you will see the kingdom of God around you.

Always be looking for ways that you can help build the kingdom around you.

Take joy in the fact that God has chosen YOU to help build his kingdom.

And then in the future, when the day the kingdom of God appears in glory, it not only won't frighten you, you'll rejoice in its arrival.