

Second Sunday of Lent: The Plan for a Life Worth Living

"This is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him!" The voice on the Mountain of the Transfiguration, the voice of God the Father, was not speaking to Jesus who had radiated His Divinity. It was not speaking to Moses, who had come to discuss the Word of God in the Law with the Word of God in the Flesh. It was not speaking to Elijah who was there to discuss the Word of God in the Prophets with the Word of God standing before him. No, "This is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him," was directed to the disciples Peter, James and John. The voice is directed to the disciples, Sue and Mary, Fred and Chris. The voice is directed to each of us.

Those on that mountain had been discussing the Plan, God's plan for the salvation of mankind, the return of mankind to God. The Word of God Become Flesh would offer His Flesh on the Cross to begin the Plan. The disciples who listen to Him, will continue the Plan until God's will is complete. We will continue the Plan, at least if we are willing to embrace a *Life Worth Living* as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen brilliantly entitled his teaching on the Christian life.

We have been called to be Christians. We have been called to follow Christ in every aspect of our lives, until our part in the Plan is complete.

Anything less, is insufficient, inadequate, incomplete.

Perhaps, God has called you to the sacrament of marriage. Do not just love your husband, your wife the way every other man or woman in the world loves her husband or his wife. Insufficient, inadequate, incomplete. Love your husband, love your wife the way that Jesus loves us, on the Cross, at the Resurrection. Love with sacrificial love. Love with life giving love. Put him first, put her first, and let the rest of the world experience Christ in your love. You are far more than a couple whom biology and necessity and pheromones have brought together. No, you are called together to be part of the Big Picture, the Plan for mankind's return to God. Be the Light on the Mountain, show the world the way that Christian Love transforms a house into a home, into a little Church.

Maybe you have been called to be a parent, or parents. Don't just take care of your children. Insufficient. Inadequate. Incomplete. Your children were made by you and your husband or wife, or perhaps by their biological parents who gave them to you through an agency. But they were also made by God. They were created by God to bring a new reflection of His Love to the World. They have spiritual potential beyond our ability to imagine. Don't let them waste their potential. Don't train them to waste their lives. You are raising children for God! Teach them to make God's love their Center, their reason for being. Do this by the way you live your lives, as well as by the way you pray. Challenge your children to embrace a Life Worth Living.

Perhaps you are not called to marriage or to parenthood, but live as a single man or woman embracing a career. Whether you are married or single, do not just go to work to make money. There are people there in that office, on that job site, in that hospital room, doctors office, law firm, wherever, there are people there who are longing for God, even if they do not know why their lives are so desperate, so meaningless. Do not just go to work. Bring Christ to work. Work as a Christian. Treat others with the Kindness that was the real magnet that drew others to Jesus. Let others see that you live the values you profess. Anything other than that is just wasting your time for the sake of making money. You are so much more than that. You are so much better than that.

Perhaps your careers are over, your children are raising your grandchildren and perhaps even those are in college now. Perhaps age and sickness have reduced what you can physically do. Perhaps you are tempted to say to yourself, "I've done my best to complete what God wants from me in life. I'm done now. I've done my part." Incomplete! Your life is not over until it is over. How do you know what God's plans are for you? Maybe there is that one person you are going to visit to cheer up this week who will finally embrace Christ. How do you know what God's plans are for you? Maybe there is that one prayer you will say today that will convince someone to give in to Grace, to change his or her life, to turn to God. The race is not over until we cross the finish line of life. Only then are we able to fully embrace the Life of Christ.

God decides what the Big Picture, the Plan of our lives is, not us. Do I have the right to say, "I've been a priest for almost 49 years. I've

done my part. It is time to coast into the finish line?" No way! That's telling God that the past is all He's going to get from me. That's telling God that I'll decide what the plan is for me, not Him. We have got to run the race to the finish. Way back in 1982 I was competing in the Fun and Sun Run, a 10K or 6.2 mile race in Clearwater. That was 44 years and 50 pounds ago. I had recently broken the 39 minute mark in the Strawberry Run in Plant City and felt I could drop another minute. I knew I was close to receiving a trophy for being one of the top three in my age division. So I went out of the starting line fast, too fast. I should have gone by that first mile mark at 6 minutes and 20 seconds. I went by it at 6. I kept up my pace and was doing great, well ahead of just about everyone in my age group, until I hit the 6 mile mark. Then, with only two tenths of a mile to go, my body said, "Time to call it a day." It shut down. I hit the wall. And people started passing me, and passing me, and I ended up tenth in my age division, fortunate to have finished. Seniors, retirees, we cannot do that with our lives. We cannot be satisfied with the first six miles, We have got to sprint to the finish. We have got to finish our part in His Plan. Anything else is insufficient, inadequate, and incomplete.

"But," you say, "I have not run a very good race. I have had parts of my life where I gave up, gave myself over to Life without Christ." Do not look back! God has forgiven you, you need to forgive yourselves. Do not look back. Dwelling on the past could also lead one to mourning the loss of a sinful life. Remember what happened to Lot's wife. She looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities of sin. And then she was frozen in her place, turned into a pillar of salt and rock. That is what happens to us when we look back at the sins of our lives. We become petrified, pillars of rock that can no longer move forward. God forgives us so we can move forward. He forgives us so we can assume the role he has for each of us in His Plan. We need to forgive ourselves.

Young people. Do not waste your lives! You do not exist for the sake of Middle School and High School and College and Grad School. Do not sell yourselves short, infinitely short. You were created to be part of God's Plan. Look for the Big Picture. God has a role for you in His Plan for mankind. "This is my Son, my Beloved, Listen to Him." Listen to Jesus. So, you are all upset, tied up in a knot, because your girlfriend or boyfriend dumped you, or because you knew that you needed to dump him or her. Life is so much more than this. Or you are all upset because

you did not make the team, or the college. God, obviously, has other things in store. Look for the Big Picture. You were created to lead others in the quest for meaning, in the quest for Christ. You are an integral part of the Plan. Yes, you are hurt because something that happened to you. But do not let that hurt dissuade you from your whole purpose for being.

You and I are so much more than what meets our own eyes.

You and I were made to worship

You and I are called to love

You and I are forgiven and free

You and I embrace surrender

You and I choose to believe

You and I will see who we were meant to be.

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That's from the contemporary Christian song writer, Chris Tomlin. He nailed it. You and I are not just a few of billions of people. We are not insignificant. We have been chosen to continue the work of Jesus Christ. How great is that? How great is our God!

During Lent we remind ourselves of the message on that mountain, the Mountain of the Transfiguration: "This is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him." We remember the message. We consider how well we have listened, how well we are listening. And we leave the mountain with the other disciples, determined to complete the role set aside for each one of us for all eternity, the role, our role, in His Plan. We leave the mountain this Sunday determined to embrace a Life Worth Living.