

Homily, 31st Sunday of Ordinary Time "A"
(With the Anointing of the Sick)
SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
October 29 - 30, 2011
Rev. Noah J. Casey

Do what they say; not what they do. This admonition of Jesus to his disciples is more than a casual encouragement. This admonition goes to the heart of the spiritual life. It is a challenge to be consistent, to bring together into one what we say and what we do. It sounds so simple. Our personal conversion is a daily call to bring into focus our deepest longings for the love of God.

For years my father has used one of the Polaroid Instamatic cameras, the kind that shoots the square photo out the front of the camera and develops in your hand. This camera has been replaced in a way by all the cell phone cameras. Those Polaroids were made for folks like me who are mechanically challenged. The focusing device is quite simple. You simply turn a small wheel on top of the camera and look through the lens. When the two halves of the circle were together forming one circle, you knew the camera was in focus.

I have always thought this to be a wonderful image for conversion. The task of every Christian is to bring the half of the circle of what we say with the half of the circle that represents what we do. Doing and saying are supposed to be one circle of living.

Behind the challenging words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees was more than criticism. Jesus was challenging them to have humility. They appealed to their status in the community as religious leaders. They love all the externals of religious observance, but they have not nurtured the grace of humility to put service of others before empty rules. The Lord has

told them that they sit in the seats of religious authority, and rely only on their titles. Real Christian living is found in the humility that finds us sitting in the chair of humility.

The gift of humility allows us to see our place along side of our fellow travelers on the journey of life. The arrogance of piling on others an endless weight of laws is not service. Authority is credible only if it based on service of others. As important as rules and laws are, they come to life if they are at the service of people.

In just a few moments, some among us will receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. This beautiful expression of God's healing power comes to us not just as recipients. This sacrament comes to us that we in turn might be a healing presence in our world. What we say in the beautiful words of the ritual must find expression in our behavior as we become agents of healing in our families, our neighborhoods, our places of work and every place that life may take us.

Let us pray today that our words will find a home in our deeds. Let us seek the grace to be consistent in our faith speaking and living our journey of conversion.