**16th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle B) Homily**

**Saint William, Champion | June 18, 2021**

**Jer 23:1-6** **|** **Eph 2:13-18** **|** **Mk 6:30-34**

The months of June, July, and August are some of the busiest travel times. Here in the United States, most people make use of their vacation time over the summer and travel all over. Some go to visit distant family or friends; others go to scenic areas like the Grand Canyon or quaint locations in New England. Many others, myself included, love going to the beach. After many of us were cooped up last summer, there are plenty of people who are trying to make up for lost time. If our schedules don’t allow for a week long trip, we may find ourselves enjoying some time away on a weekend – or even a long weekend. And maybe we’ll sprinkle a day trip in, whether it might be to an amusement park or local sights like the Football Hall of Fame, or the beaches or islands around Lake Erie.

Jesus understood our human condition well. He knew the value of rest and the need to take some time away. So when the disciples returned from their journeys witnessing to the nearby villages, he had some rest and recreation planned for them. He invited them to come away to a deserted place where they could take a break from preaching and teaching and just be themselves and relax. But even Jesus’s plans don’t always work out. As the disciples depart in a boat, the people following them figure out where they are headed, and when Jesus and the disciples arrive at their destination, everyone is there waiting for them. At this point, Jesus understood how lost they were, and how much they needed Him. He could sense their fear, their confusion, and their suffering. He put the plans for R & R aside for another day and began to minister and teach them.

Today we are reminded about the compassion of Jesus. Compassion is a Latin word that means to suffer with another, to put ourselves in the place of others. It allows us to step out of our perspective and see things from the perspective of others. And it was compassion that was one of the keys to Jesus ministry. His first miracle at the wedding at Cana came about because he understood the potential embarrassment for the couple as their wine was running out. We see that same compassion throughout his ministry when Jesus forgave others when he felt their sorrow, and healed others when he felt their pain. Even on the cross, he was willing to forgive those calling for his death because he understood their ignorance.

Compassion is the opposite of having a hard heart. In our modern society, it has become a common occurrence to blame others for their shortcomings, to consider ourselves to be morally superior, to judge others based on the limited knowledge we have of their situation. Consider a couple examples…

The person in line in the store in front of you who pulls the Ohio Direction card or food stamps out of their wallet or purse to pay their bill…

The person who ran out of gas and now needs a ride to the gas station or whose car has broken down…

The person who is addicted to alcohol or painkillers or even heroin…

In each of these cases, it would be easy to lay blame on the person because they were lazy, or failed to prepare, or made bad life choices. It would be so easy to say or think, “I’m glad that’s not me”. Compassion reminds us that “there but for the grace of God go I”.

A number of years ago, I was driving home from work and saw a man whose car had broken down at the corner of State Road and Mahoning Avenue. He needed help to push his car out of the road to a safe place. I stopped and helped him, and watched him leave a note for the business where he parked his car with his name and phone number, explaining that he would be back to get it. I don’t remember if he asked me for a ride or if I volunteered one, but I drove him to a trailer park on North River Road. We talked along the way. He was a nice guy, and I figured that he had some handicaps. And then he said something that hit me… He mentioned that his brother was a “big shot” at General Motors… I remembered the name I’d seen him write on the note, and put two and two together. I had met his brother probably twenty years ago when he was doing a presentation on a project here at Packard. I never ran into him again, but wondered… who might have helped him if I hadn’t?

Today’s Gospel reminds us that reaching out and truly loving our brothers and sisters is rarely convenient or easy. It reminds us that we need to make room in our busy lives and schedules for the service of others, not when it’s convenient to us, but when they need it. It calls us to look at others with the compassion of Jesus, realizing that someone needs to help them – and ask ourselves the question, “Am I willing to be that somebody?”