

## Fr. Gerard's column 3/19/23

*Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

This one-line admonition from today's second reading is worth pondering, because learning what is pleasing to the Lord is one thing, doing it is another. I know that it pleases the Lord when I am patient, merciful and sacrificial in my actions, but in my humanity, I often fail to do what pleases the Lord. In examining the moments of failure that I encounter, I find that my failure is often due to my vulnerability. When I am tired, when I am pulled in many directions, or when I am hurt, is when I find it hardest to please the Lord and others.

Some of us are people pleasers. We get pleasure and satisfaction when we are affirmed by others. There is nothing wrong with finding gratification in receiving accolades, however it is problematic if our mental, emotional, and spiritual health is dependent on them. Such affirmation is fleeting and not consistent. In addition, social approval is often gained at the expense of others. Finally, as the saying goes, "you can't please everyone." Yet, I am bothered when I don't please everyone and can become fixated on where approval is lacking.

As a priest and a pastor, I want to please the people I serve, and I want to please the Lord. I know that I may not always please everyone in their preferences or concerns, and with humility I must accept that fact. In my relationship with God, I know that I can and must do a better job in pleasing the Lord. What pleases the Lord? The letter to the Hebrews tells us that, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him, for anyone who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6) Somewhat akin to the relationship between parent and child, it pleases God when we entrust ourselves to Him. In doing so we are allowing ourselves to be loved. Struggling with our doubts is not a rejection of faith, nor is anger, frustration or a loss of patience with God. All of these serve to strengthen our faith. Despite challenges, our faith leads us to fidelity to prayer and the sacraments and the graces that flow from them. Faith seeks understanding when we engage in theological reflection and the reading of the scriptures, all of this pleases the Lord, not because of the answers or the conclusions we reach, but the pursuit that seeks to please him.

It is also pleasing to the Lord when we follow his commandment to, "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" (John 13:34) Loving as we have been loved, is living a life of sacrifice. It pleases the Lord when we love through mercy, compassion, and patience. It pleases the Lord when we love each other through our willingness to walk in the shoes of the poor, marginalized and condemned. We please the Lord when seek to emulate the sacred heart of Jesus who poured out his love for us on the cross.

In our opening prayer today we plead, "*that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.*" Let the remaining days of Lent be characterized by our desire to please the Lord in all things and therefore rejoice in the salvation he has won for us.

**THE LENTEN JOURNEY CONTINUES** – I thank all who participated in our Lenten retreat with Steve Angrisano. His presence reminded us that there is a space in our souls that only God can fill. The remaining weeks of Lent continue to provide us with opportunities to allow the Lord to fill his place in our souls. In addition to daily mass and the weekly periods of adoration, I remind you of the upcoming Lent events:

- **The Chosen** – Viewing and discussion of an episode from season 2. Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in the rectory meeting room.
- **Soup Supper** – An evening to enjoy a simple meal and community – Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the school auditorium.
- **Stations of the Cross with Lectio Divina** – Friday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the church.
- **Diocesan Day of Reconciliation** - Experience the liberating grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance). Confessions will be heard on Monday, April 3 from 2-4 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. at all parishes in the Diocese of Rockville Centre (drvc.org), the Diocese of Brooklyn (dioceseofbrooklyn.org) and the Archdiocese of New York (archny.org).

In solidarity, let us continue to pray for and with each other throughout the days of Lent.

Peace!

