

12A SML 2017
MT 10:26-33

Of the four gospels, Matthew is the most ordered. Matthew alternates five sections of stories of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth with five public sermons. Matthew's most famous sermon was his first, the Sermon on the Mount. However, the gospels from last week, this week and next week are taken from Matthew's second sermon on missionaries. In this sermon on missionaries, our Blessed Lord told his apostles everything they needed to know from soup to nuts about being a missionary.

By this time in Matthew's gospel, Our Blessed Lord has already picked his missionary staff and gave them a plan of action:

Jesus sent these men on mission as the Twelve, after giving them the following instructions: "Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead after the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Next week, Our Blessed Lord told his missionaries they were His representatives.

This week, Our Blessed Lord told them they would be persecuted for their missionary activity. They would be tormented physically. They would be:

- ✓ tried in court,
- ✓ whipped in the synagogues,
- ✓ and disowned by their families.

So Our Blessed Lord gave an example using the Father's care of sparrows to tell his missionary disciples to have courage under persecution, even when they feel God forsaken:

Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

In addition to Jesus preaching five public sermons, five sermons for the masses to hear, Jesus also taught his disciples in private.

- ✓ He would teach to the masses,
- ✓ the masses would grasp what they could,
- ✓ the disciples would grasp what they could
- ✓ and they would ask questions later.

They would ask questions in the house, and in the house, in private, Jesus would give further instruction:

And when Jesus had entered **the house**, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast the demon out?" And Jesus said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." (MK 9:28-29)

And they came to Capernaum, and when Jesus was **in the house**, he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they were silent for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. And Jesus said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be the last and the servant of all." (MK 9:33)

And **in the house** the disciples asked Jesus again about divorce. And Jesus said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

And in this evening's (morning's) gospel:
What I say to you in the darkness (in other words, "in private"), speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

And what Jesus was telling them was clear: "Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul.

Rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna." **In other words, body and soul are different.**

Your body can be injured without your consent, but not your soul.

The soul:

- ✓ the innermost aspect of man,
- ✓ that which is of greatest value in him,
- ✓ that by which he is most especially in God's image,
- ✓ "the spiritual principle of a man," says the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- ✓ the core of our being,
- ✓ the conscious self.

The soul is mystery. St. Theresa of Avila, one of the greatest Christian mystics, encouraged a life of detachment to explore the full realm of the soul. "There is no doubt," she says, "that if a person perseveres in this nakedness and detachment from all worldly things, he will reach his goal." Theresa would agree the soul yearns for simplicity, order, meaning, detachment and no distractions.

Fine for the mystic. Great for the contemplative. But we are secular. We live in the world and are affected by it. We cannot detach. You have your marriage. You have your kids. I have my priesthood. And life for the secular is:

- ✓ not simple,

- ✓ not ordered,
- ✓ not always meaningful,
- ✓ and detached.

Rather, life is:

- ✓ complex,
- ✓ changing,
- ✓ moody,
- ✓ rooted
- ✓ and attached.

And the soul is so affected by life in all its particulars. The soul is affected by every person and every circumstance you meet. The soul is affected, for sure, but it is lost only by choice.

Body and soul are different. You can take excellent care of your body: eat right, exercise, take Geritol every day and have a stroke tomorrow . . . but never the soul.

My first pastor in Freehold was Monsignor Coffey who has since gone to God. He was a fine priest, and I lived with him for his last year of active priesthood before he retired. As an elderly priest he took care of himself as best he could. He enjoyed his retirement, vacationing here and there and helping out at the Cathedral in Metuchen, but eventually, he suffered a stroke that affected his entire left side. I visited him as much as I could, and

we talked and reminisced about Freehold. During one visit - the conversation I forget, but I'll never forget one line. This broken, frail man, confined to a wheelchair, said, "Dan, take care of your soul. Take care of your soul."

There are very few who are satisfied with their spiritual life. I would love to take mine to the next level, whatever the next level is. But it takes time and it takes priority. A deeper spiritual life will not "just happen."

- ✓ You need to receive Holy Communion every week.,
- ✓ You need to go to Confession.
- ✓ You need to adore our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist.

My most peaceful time is in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and my Fitbit proves it. My heart rate is at its lowest when I'm before the Blessed Sacrament. I am very much looking forward to a 24/7 Eucharistic Adoration Chapel, so you can come and pray at any hour, any day.

- ✓ You need to read.
- ✓ You need to study.

I'm planning another adult scripture study in the fall, and again next spring.

Mystics we are not. Theresas of Avila we are not. We will never have a life of simplicity, order, meaning, detachment and

no distractions to explore the full realm of the soul. Rather we will have a life chock full of persons, places and things that will affect the soul.

Today's meditation from Fulton Sheen is timely:

When does the soul die?

- ✓ Whenever there is the domination of the lower order over the higher order,
- ✓ Whenever there is the domination of the individual over the community,
- ✓ Of the flesh over the spirit,
- ✓ Of time over eternity,
- ✓ Of the body over the soul,

Then there is death and that death we call sin.

That is why St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, equates death with sin in the moral order. "The wages of sin is death." That is why in the parable of the prodigal son, the father said of the prodigal, "He was dead. Now he is alive."ⁱ

Body and soul are different. Your body can be injured without your consent, but not your soul. Take care of your soul.

ⁱ Through the Year with Fulton Sheen, 6/24