

May 17-18, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

Next weekend Fr. John and I will be doing the Anointing of the Sick at all the Masses. I am trying to do this twice a year. It is obviously for those who are ill but it is also for those who are healthy, for it helps in understanding each other. When we look at those who are struggling we should be building empathy with them. This is a part of God's plan that I have been trying to explain the past couple weeks.

In the Gospel of John 10:10 Jesus says: "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." The devil is the thief. He sets traps for us. Everything he offers looks so good at first glance. He offers things that make us feel good right away. Think in terms of the deadly sins; lust, greed, gluttony, etc. Food is good. Sex is good. Money is good, at least at first glance. But each can be taken to an extreme and be horrible. What Jesus offers us is so different. Just the idea of committing yourself to one person for life seems crazy. What if it doesn't work? Why would I have kids? What if they are not perfect? How will I deal with them? How can we control our sexual appetites so our love is not hurtful? How can we share what we have so we can bring joy to another? How can we worry less about feeding our own face and worry more about feeding the hungry?

The best way I can think of to deal with this is by imagining heaven. What will it be like? For a Cornhusker fan it is football wins forever. For a dieter it is fabulous food forever without ever gaining weight. For a jihadist I have read it is 72 virgins. For me many think it would be Cheetos forever. What is our deepest desire? What has God built us to be fulfilled by? The only thing that wouldn't bore us to tears in a few years would be something that is infinite. Only the infinite can hold our focus for eternity. Anything else would make us feel like puppies, constantly watching for the next distraction. That is what our society is trying to give us and we are more unhappy than any previous generation. So many of us are in need of anti-depressants or anything else that will take away the numbness of a tedious life. So what will heaven be?

We have to go back to marriage to find out. God has built us for it, but what does it contain that can give us a clue to heaven? News flash, even priests know that marriage is not heaven; but there is certainly the potential for heavenly moments. What are they? I find this out when I help individuals file for an annulment. Most of the forms include the question: What were the happy events of your marriage? Here are the top ones that I hear from most individuals. Finding someone who they thought loved them. Building something together, especially the birth of their children. Watching the accomplishments of their children as they taught them different skills.

So imagine a lengthening of these moments of glory that can be experienced in marriage. Imagine finding out that God really does love us and wants to share every part of His life with us and wants us to share every part of our life with Him. Imagine being a part of building a whole new creation, a new heaven and a new earth. Imagine watching each other grow while knowing that we worked with God to make that new accomplishment of our neighbor happen. By the way all of these things are able to be experienced by someone who isn't married, even priests, but we have to learn how to make them happen in different ways. But it all comes down to taking the risk of giving our heart and soul to someone else. We have to offer ourselves to another, and it can't just be a pet. For love takes on more "divine" aspects the more risk there is involved. Loving a stuffed animal has few risks. Loving a pet has more. Loving a person is tough. But it is only in the next step of truly loving God that we can be fulfilled for eternity. Then we will be a part of the ultimate love relationship, but we have so many lessons to learn in this world to prepare us for the next. But we must remember that our relationship with God is more difficult than a marriage relationship, which is why working on a marriage can help us know how to work on our relationship with God.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank