

August 21, 2022 -Deacon Jim Luke 13 22-30

I started my homily on Thursday with these words and God's invitation to us is not a one-time thing. It's a constant reminder and an open invitation to renew ourselves every day in his eyes.

When the Lord called and I listened for the first time in my life I had no idea where my journey would lead. I had no idea where I was being led. I was baptized as an infant, attended St Brenden's school in Dorchester from grades one through eight and yet as many Cradle Catholics experience, circumstances led me away from the faith. I don't think I can pinpoint one particular moment in time when I got lost but I do know it was way too many years to find my way back.

One of the joys of being a Deacon is the sacrament of baptism and when I give a homily, I always refer to the graces we receive in baptism. Graces that remain with us throughout our lives. It's like a seed planted in the fall that lays dormant waiting for the spring so it can take root and grow. Sometimes our faith can be like that. God decides when its our time to grow. Even though we have free will to decide for ourselves through God's generous love he sends his Spirit upon us to give us a little nudge.

There's a line in a Christian song that always touches my heart and I think it's because it reminds me of when the Holy Spirit really opened my eyes for the first time.

The song is called "The Prince of Peace", and the line is. "Hope like the sunlight piercing through the dark, the prince of peace came and broke into my heart". When we have hope we leave our hearts open to goodness and even when our hearts are open just a little the light of Christ can fill the void created by darkness. I think it's helpful to think of it this way, darkness does not exist it's only the absence of light. When God is absent from our lives we are left in the dark.

The one thing that is so personal to us is our soul. No one but God can penetrate the depths of our being. He alone knows when it is our time to surrender to his grace. When our time comes, we need to listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah,

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“Seek the Lord where he may be found, call upon him when he is near. Let the wicked forsake their way, and sinners their thoughts; Let them turn to the Lord to find mercy; to our God who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.”

God has a plan for each and everyone of us, and like he said to the prophet Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you”.

Think about that for a moment. This is why we say that life begins at conception and ends with natural death. If we were formed in the womb by the hand of God then from that moment on, we belong to him. No mortal man can decide when life begins because that right belongs only to God.

The reading from Isaiah reminds us that all are called to become children of God. The grace of God and his generosity is not limited to the Jewish people. All nations will be given the opportunity to come face to face with the truth. A choice will have to be made by the people for themselves as to who will accept and who will reject His generosity.

The road to eternal life can be a glorious journey but it can also be a difficult one. Evil exists in this world and the devil is a master of deceit. The closer we get to God the more intense the temptation gets.

St Paul reminds the Hebrews that loving God and following his commands will not only be difficult at times but may also bring great distress and suffering. The question being what are we willing to endure in this life to gain eternal joy in heaven.

It's the limitations that we place on ourselves that lead us to the wider path. Jesus reminds us in the Gospel that our lives need to be focused on God first in order to redeem ourselves and allow us through the narrow door. How easy it can be to give into the wants and desires of this life.

Jesus calls on us to follow him and to imitate his kindness. Love one another as I love you. Be generous with your time, your talent and your abundance. Show compassion and embrace those less fortunate than yourself. Get involved in corporal works of mercy. We are not saved by faith alone. When the Holy Spirit

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invites you to open your heart to the love of God that's your opportunity to avail yourself of the narrow gate where the door will be open and Jesus will be waiting to bring you to the Father as he promised all who rely on him.

Let us pray, "Lord Jesus, may I never doubt your guiding presence and your tender love and mercy towards me. Through the gift of your Spirit fill me with persevering faith and courage to trust you always in all things and in every circumstance I find myself in. May your love set my heart aflame with love for you who are my all. Amen