

Fr Ryan Homily 10/8/23

Read: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80; Philippians 4:6-9; Matthew 21:33-43

You may have heard of this guy, his name is Usain Bolt. He is an Olympic runner, crazy good and Netflix did a documentary on him called I Am Bolt. This guy is like the best sprinter who ever lived and in this documentary he was going into the 2016 season and Usain already won six Olympic gold medals at two different Olympics. So he was saying I just don't have the fire anymore, the drive to train, the drive to compete and he's Jamaican so he already has this laid-back demeanor. He said I just wanna do whatever I wanna do. I wanna eat whatever I wanna eat, drink whatever I wanna drink, I wanna be able to wake up whenever I wanna wake up. I just wanna do what I wanna do. And then something happened. The man who was the best American sprinter at the time, his name was Justin Gatlin, he did an interview, and he pretty much threw down. He said Usain Bolt is done, he's through, he's finished, and now I'm the greatest and he'll never beat me again. Usain Bolt said he watched that interview and when he heard what Justin Gatlin said it was like a switch flipped in his mind. And he went from I wanna do whatever I wanna do to I will do whatever I need to do. From whatever I wanna do to whatever I need to do to be a champion and to win. And there's a moment like that I think in almost all of our lives. Something triggers us to say no to just whatever cause I don't know if this is in you, I know it's in me, it's this desire to say I just wanna do whatever. I wanna eat what I wanna eat, drink what I wanna drink, think what I wanna think, do what I wanna do. And I think most of us have that in us until we realize we're called to something greater or until we are confronted with something darker that needs to be confronted. A whatever attitude until we realize we're called to something greater. Whatever I want until it becomes whatever I need to do. But in order to make that change in mentality first I have to be able to describe life as it is. I need to be able to see reality clearly and not say whatever to whatever comes down the path. Well I disagree with that but to each his own. No, to sometimes look and say I see that for what it is; that is evil. It is no good, stay away. Right cause the test of any world view of any approach to life is how it stands up to reality cause we all look out at the same world. But if someone looks and doesn't see evil for what it is, then how you are seeing something doesn't stand up to reality. Well how do we know we have the right way to see things? Cause we have Jesus. We have His teaching, His church.

We have Jesus' spirit living inside of us to guide us. I should be able to know how Jesus sees the world and know if I see it the same way. So to see like Jesus is to see things as they are. To look at something that is evil and not say whatever or that's stupid but it's not my problem. To look and say no that's evil, it needs to be stopped. Do we have the ability, you and I, to call evil evil and good good or do we not. To see like Jesus I can't be indiscriminate. What that means is I can't just look and say whatever I have to see things as they are. Example: a few years ago a very famous American died. A man who has changed our culture. Maybe not more than anyone else but definitely one of the top cultural influencers of the last 100 years for sure. Hugh Hefner. Remember that name? Hugh Hefner dies at ninety whatever years old and I remember when he died it was everywhere nationally. Everyone was talking about what a cultural icon Hugh Hefner was. The empire he started, the glitz, the glamor, the red carpets, the mansions, what an impact Hugh Hefner made. What they weren't willing to say was Hugh Hefner's life was miserable and he left a legacy of evil. But were not willing to say that, why? If we're going to see like Jesus we have to see things as they are because what Hugh Hefner created was a porn culture. Not alone, it wasn't just him, but he had a significant role in creating a culture that is pornified, that objectifies women and it's insidious and it's evil and unfortunately it's been normalized. So we don't recognize a danger for what it is. And of course porn can lead to objectification which leads to abuse, which leads to crime. And we see those other things that it leads to, but we don't see the line back to the first thing. We ask how do these problems exist? Well it's because of this guy you think of as a hero, a free expression – Hugh Hefner. To look at a life like his and see it for what it is. What he started it harms people, it harms souls, and I don't know even bringing it up in church right now it makes us uncomfortable, bringing it to the light. But we gotta call it what it is. Part of being Catholic is being able to see as Jesus sees beneath the candy coated exterior into the misery it produces. Cause for many of us it's kind of a joke isn't it? It's like nudge nudge, wink wink. How many of you know who the character Barney Stinson is? Barney Stinson, How I Met Your Mother, most popular sitcom for how ever many years it was on. Barney Stinson, he's played by Neil Patrick Harris, he is the funniest character on that tv show and he is by far the most charming. He has the best lines. He makes every scene that he's in. Other characters, they're fine. Barney comes on he's hilarious. And Barney is a dirty dog because Barney's whole life is spent making a lot of money, being

awesome, everything is legendary and after work he goes and tries to pick up as many women as he can. If he can't pick up a woman, then he goes to a strip club and he just lives this life. And he's funny, he is a punch line, he is entertaining. You know they made a movie a few years back with Michael Fassbender called Shame. Don't know if you ever heard of the movie, did not make a big splash when it came out in cinemas. Michael Fassbender plays Barney Stinson if Barney Stinson was in the real world. He is a handsome man, he has a powerful job, a great career, and after work every day Michael Fassbender's character will go try to pick up women. If that doesn't work, he'll go to a strip club, and after that if he still doesn't have anyone, he'll hire a prostitute. And in this movie is this image of no this is what it looks like in real life. It's not legendary, it's awful. In the movie it's this picture of a person who can't function. He can't function at his job, he can't maintain relationships, there is no joy. He is miserable living that lifestyle. It is not funny ha ha. And that's what great art does, it shows us reality as it is. Remember to see like Jesus is to see things as they are, and great art always does that. Great art doesn't just show us beautiful things, great art can take the veil off of evil. It shows us the ugliness of evil. Schindler's List, an overused example I know, but you watch that, and you see this is the result truly, this is where it leads when you treat people like people like they're not people. Great art helps me to see things as they are, to realize that to live in this world I cannot be indiscriminate, I can't say whatever, I need to be critical of things. In fact, that's what our first reading from Isaiah brings out. Isaiah talks about my friends vineyard. He's got a great vineyard, he took care of the land, and then what? He planted the choicest vines. But then when he came to see if there were choice grapes, what grew were wild grapes. Now if you were a Jewish person listening to that scripture, that would be the turn, that's the record scratched like wait that doesn't happen. If you have good land and you plant good vines then you are going to bear good fruit. That's the scriptural principal. You reap what you sew. St Paul says we reap what we sew and that means what we plant is what we are going to get back. So if you plant choice vines you're going to get back choice grapes. If you plant pumpkin seeds in the spring you're not gonna get back tomatoes in the fall. You get back what you plant. So to look like Jesus what am I planting in my brain? What am I thinking about? What am I exposing myself to? In the first reading for those grapes to turn out wild, something else was added to that soil. What do I put in my mind and my heart other than Jesus? Do I expose myself to things that tell me the truth? Or do I

expose myself to things that tell me a lie? Oh but that lie it's candy coated so I say whatever, it's all in good fun, down it goes. Do I expose myself to things that build up my life? Or to things that will steal my joy? Cause you and I are exposed to so much and our hearts and our minds are influenced so powerfully and without that awareness, that intentionality, influence becomes dominance. And all these little things I don't think matter all of a sudden weigh me down and change who I am. What I plant in my heart and in my mind is going to bear fruit someday, everything in it. So I can't say whatever, I can't say no harm no fowl, I can't say it's just a tv show lighten up. It's just a song, the lyrics whatever. I can't be indiscriminate; I have to be on guard. Scripture says this in Proverbs 4 Verse 23, one of my favorite verses in Proverbs, Proverbs 4:23 says above all else guard your heart for everything you do flows from it. Above all else guard your heart, guard your mind, everything you do flows from it. I cannot walk through life being indiscriminate and saying now whatever. I need to see things as they are and if something is coming at me and it's candy coated evil, then it's time I say no to just whatever. But we do this all the time, we allow things into our hearts and into our minds that steal our joy and steal our peace that separate us from God, and we think no big deal. But you know in Philippians Chapter 4, the second reading for today, St Paul even says this. He says have no anxiety at all but in everything with prayer and petition and thanksgiving. Make your requests known to God. Okay then what happens? Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Guys your life is meant to be far greater than the world wants it to be. And we can't afford to be indiscriminate, we can't afford to say whatever or have that attitude. St Paul says let the peace of God guard your mind, still we let stuff in. So my invitation to all of us this week as we watch the news, as we watch tv, we read books and magazines, we listen to those lyrics in the music we hear, to ask the simple question is this true? Is that statement true? Is that depiction accurate? Barney Stinson, is that really the conclusion of the choices that person would make if that person were real? Is this true? And another question along with it – what if the people I loved saw this, believed it, and lived it? And any kind of tv show, song lyrics, God this is my entertainment – no what if the people I loved saw this, believed it, and lived it? Cause I think about this when it comes to you guys as well, what if parishioners here saw this, believed it, and lived it? Or I think of my nephews and my niece because sometimes when it comes to ourselves we think I'm tough I can handle it. But

when it comes to somebody we love – hands off. I will guard them from it 100%. You guys are worth it too. You're worth fighting for, you're worth guarding as well. Your hearts and your minds are worth guarding. So above all else guard your hearts for everything you do flows from it. So we have to see like Jesus. Jesus pointed out evil for what it was especially when it was dressed up in a nice package to make it appear appealing and kinda fun. So last thing real quick, what's the result of guarding our hearts like that? What happens when we do that? If you and I guard our heart what flows from your heart will be everything that is good. St Paul tells us that. Whatever is true and good and pure and lovely and beautiful. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, he said you sow a thought you reap an act. You sow an act you reap a habit. You sow a habit you reap a character. You sow a character, and you reap a destiny. All those little thoughts that we don't think lead to anywhere it forms our destiny. So above all else it starts with how we see. It all begins with how I think and to think like Jesus, to see like Jesus, to look out like Jesus is to see things as they are.

Amen