

Fr Ryan Homily 12-10-23 – Second Sunday of Advent

Read: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

You guys have a favorite Christmas story whether it's a book, movie, or whatever it is? I think we all do right? Mine has always been that classic tale a Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. It's a story I try to re-read every year and the last time I read it I noticed something I never picked up on before. And you know the story there's this guy, his name is Ebenezer Scrooge, and we know this guy is so cruel, he's so mean, he's so heartless that his name has become synonymous with being mean and cruel and heartless and hating Christmas. And we all know that term that goes all the way back to 1884 bah humbug. That's an endurance. We say that about people or people who don't like Christmas. We say bah humbug. So this character Scrooge, he gets visited on Christmas Eve by a dead man Jacob Marley who was his old business partner. And this is that interesting thing that I never realized up until my last re-read when Scrooge is met by Jacob Marley, this man has been dead for seven years. And when Jacob appears he's covered in chains, he's clearly being tormented, tortured and he says to Scrooge here's the deal, I'm getting what's just. I deserve this because of how I lived. You've lived even worse and you're going to get even worse. And in response to that Scrooge says I'm going to bed. Like it doesn't do anything. It's not like he says oh my gosh I need to change my ways. He doesn't do anything. In fact nothing happens until something happens later that night. Scrooge is visited by three spirits – the ghost of Christmas past, Christmas present, and of Christmas' yet to come. What's interesting is that it's not the warning from this dead man, Jacob Marley who shows Scrooge what's coming, it's when those spirits reveal to him his own story that something starts to happen in Scrooge. That ghost of Christmas present shows Scrooge one of his nephews, Fred, who he thinks loves him, I've never loved him in return, I'm not part of his life. The ghost of Christmas past shows Scrooge his old employer Fezziwig which pause for a second. Can we please bring that name back Fezziwig? Any parents to be can you please name your firstborn son Fezziwig? I don't even know what it means I just wanna say I baptize you Fezziwig one day! Please do that. Anyways, Fezziwig he was a good man who treated Scrooge well and that's what makes his heart start to melt. It starts to soften. But still it's not changed until something even more dramatic happens, something more devastating. His heart isn't broken until the ghost of Christmas'

yet to come shows him something. He shows him his legacy, what will be left behind. The way the world will be because of you after you die and that's what breaks Scrooges heart. Not just here's what you did but here's what you left behind. Not just here's who you were but here's what happened to others because of who you were. The people Scrooge could've helped and made their lives better, but he chose not to. And that hit me because it makes us think of our own lives, our own legacies. Right now every one of us is writing our story, your legacy is being written right now and we know the day will come when not only will our personal story be finished but the story of creation, the story of the universe will be finished. Time will be no more. That day will happen. In fact in our second reading today St Peter is addressing this. He describes it like this – the day of the Lord will come when everything is over, and the Heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire and then he says this key line and we're gonna talk about this a little bit. And the earth and everything done on it will be found out. So we know the end, right, as Christians. In the end Jesus will have won. Jesus is gonna be king on the last day. On that last day something is gonna happen that we in Catholic circles call the last judgement. At the last judgement we are gonna know all the facts. That's what St Peter is writing about at the last judgement we will get to know the entire story and it will be understood. Every consequence of every decision you've ever made will be known. When that day comes we will know two important things. One we will know God's role in every moment in our lives and of the story and second you will know your role in that story. You'll see all the times God was hidden but never absent and you'll see the consequences of all the choices that you ever made. There's a great story in the old testament about a woman names Esther and she's awesome. It's from the Book of Esther – apply named. What happened was the people of Israel had been exiled into Babylon and the Persians came to power and they're occupying Babylon and at one point the king of Persia gets rid of his queen. He wants a brand-new queen. And so he basically has a beauty pageant looking for his next queen and Esther wins. She's elevated to be the queen of Persia and she was Jewish. She was an orphan, and she was raised by her uncle Mordecai and at one point Mordecai becomes the enemy to the number one person in all of Persia. And that number one person convinces the king that all the Jews need to be killed. And so Mordecai sends word to his adopted niece Esther and he says go before the king and convince him not to do this thing because the

entire people of Israel are meant to be killed. And Esther says if I go before the king unbidden, I could be killed. And it's in this moment that Mordecai says something that is so powerful. He says to her listen maybe it was for a time such as this that the Lord brought you to this place to act, to be part of the story. And he says these powerful words, Mordecai says know this the Lord will deliver His people from execution. Absolute confidence in God. Know this the Lord will deliver His people from execution but if you don't do something now you will have no part in that story. He will save us but if you don't act you will have no part in this story. Maybe it was for a time such as this that the Lord brought you to this place. On the last day not only will we know and understand where God has been, even those He's been hidden He was never absent; we will also know our part in the story. All those decisions we made or did not make. And here's how the catechism of the Catholic church puts it; it says the last judgement will reveal even to it's furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do in their earthly life. Just to think about that. On the last day you will know not only your own life and where God was in it, but you'll also know the furthest consequences of every decision that we've made. Every good deed that you have ever done, how it affected the next person, and the next person, and the next person. How it rippled out, but we'll also know the furthest consequences of every evil choice that we make and how that rippled out. The thing that we thought was private, hidden, no one's business, how that affected the people around us. The word that we said casually that wounded somebody and they carried it with them the rest of their life. The actions we did that burdened someone and they passed it on to their kids and they to their kids. Because we were unwilling to get that thing out of our hearts or out of our lives. Right that could be our legacy. And that means the choices we are making right now, they don't end with us. And as we're thinking about that to know the good news is the stories not over and if we need to make changes there's time to make changes. In fact this is the part of Christmas Carol where the spirit of Christmas' yet to come shows Scrooge his legacy. And Scrooge he breaks down. Tears are pouring down his face, he falls to the ground, and he says tell me spirit you wouldn't have shown me this unless I could change it. Like why would you have shown me this unless I could change my legacy. Like that's the big prayer every one of us has when we look at our story, when we think about our legacy. We can all point to good things we have done hopefully. We can all probably point to some not so good things

that we've done. We have this one question and it's the one question that all these people who went from Judea and Jerusalem that went out to the Jordan River for. They all went to John for one reason. They all went to be baptized by him with one question, can I change? Can I be changed? Is my story over or is there hope? That's the question of every single person who went out to see John; that was the question on their hearts. That was the question of Scrooge and that's the question St Peter answers in the second reading today. What does he say? He says listen you may think the Lord is delayed in coming. You may think the Lord is putting off writing that last page and He is for one reason – so you can rewrite your story. So you can change. C S Lewis puts it like this, he says you can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending. And so here's that last question for us to think about – where do we start now? What can we do today? Well I'd say this if that last judgement, that last page, is about truth, where we will fully know the truth, then I think we start by telling the truth. If the day of the Lord is about revealing all that has happened on the earth, then maybe we start by revealing what is hidden now. And to just take a moment to praise the Lord that He's given us the sacrament of confession where we can do that. The sacrament of confession, that is rehearsal for the last day. The sacrament of confession is rehearsal for Heaven, why? Because we go into the confessional and we say this is the truth, this is the truth about my life. I'm not going to hide. I'm going to let this be revealed in the midst of God's mercy and love. But then conversely to refuse to go to confession is rehearsal for hell. I'm going to hold onto these things and keep them hidden all my life until the day I can't anymore, and they will be revealed but then it's too late. When the angels announced Jesus' birth what was their message? That a child is born to save God's people from their sins. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, that's why John went out there. That's why Jesus was born – to answer that one question in all of our hearts is there hope for me? Can I change? And the answer is absolutely yes there is and yes you can but only, only with humility and only with truth. Cause yes one day the story will have been written and every moment of your life will have been lived. And one day every decision will have been made and it will be known and understood where God was and how He brought justice out of even the most painful moments. Your role in the legacy of all your choices and my choices will be made. But today, today is still a blank page. Today's a new day. Today is a day you can change your story. And if you can change your story, you

can change your life. And if you can change your life, then you can change your legacy.

Amen