

Fr Ryan Homily 6/25/23

Read: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Psalm 89; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10:37-42

So I came across a story recently of a guy named Jake Van Cedar and Jake was in his late teens early twenties during WWII. When Jake was young his father ran a grain mill and when he was sixteen his father died, and he took over the mill. And the war broke out in the Netherlands, he was Dutch, and the occupying Nazi government said all farmers need to give a portion of their grain to the government. And Jake did not believe that was just. He did not believe that was fair or right and so he just didn't do it. He covered it up. Also there were fugitives on the run from the Nazi government who were being recruited and didn't want to enlist. And at one point Jacob, who was 17 18 19 at the time, he had hid 19 fugitives in his mill. And Jake said you know the government used food stamps, we didn't have any, so I had to figure out a way to keep these 19 people alive. So imagine being a teenager being responsible for 19 fugitives and your family and keeping them alive and there's no food and you have to be defiant against an unjust government. But he did it for a while and at 21 Jake was arrested, his property was confiscated, they took everything. Thrown in prison, he was tortured he was abused, and he says he almost died so many times. And I'm gonna return back to Jake at the end because what he said helped him endure all of that is really incredible and it's something every one of us has access to as well. So well get back to Jake. First we gotta dig into our gospel here. It's Matthew Chapter 10 and Jesus' first words are so powerful. He just says fear no one and it's interesting because when you go to scripture and you look that's not exactly what it says, they leave out a word. In scripture it says therefore fear no one. And were like wait wait, whenever you see the word therefore in scripture you have to ask the question – what is that there for? Meaning what is the context. So this is Matthew Chapter 10. Matthew Chapter 5 through 7 was Jesus' sermon on the mount. He's on this hillside, thousands of people are streaming towards Him to listen to this powerful teaching and people love it. They love Him. And then in Chapters 8 and 9 He's performing all these miracles. So many people streaming towards Jesus and He touches them, and they're healed. And He raises the dead; He does all these incredible things. And then at the beginning of Chapter 10, He tells His apostles I'm giving you my authority. Your going to go out and you're going to be able to do what I've been doing. And you can imagine what these men would've thought

immediately. Right they would think this is phenomenal. Like Chapter 5 through 7 Jesus is teaching everybody wants to listen to Him. Chapters 8 and 9 Jesus is healing. Everyone is coming to Jesus, they love Him. And now He's telling us that we're gonna go out and have His authority? He's sending us out into the world? This is gonna be amazing, right? Well in Chapter 10 Jesus says yeah here's what they're gonna do. You're gonna go out like Me have My power My authority and they're gonna hand you over to the courts and you'll be scourged in the synagogues. And you'll be led before governors and kings and they will try you unfairly. And brothers will kill brothers and fathers will kill their sons. And sons will rise up and kill against their fathers and kill them. And He goes on, He says you will be hated by everyone because of my name. And when they persecute you, shake off the dust, go to the next town. Basically when they start persecuting you keep going. And then it's the gospel we heard today. Therefore fear no one. All this stuff is gonna happen to you, I'm letting you know in advance. Therefore fear no one. Why? Well it's not because you're amazing. It's not because everything is going to go your way. Not because you'll have things work out the way that you want them to. Not because you have any guarantees. And above all, above all, Jesus does not say fear no one because you're going to be safe. Which we put a lot of energy in our lives to being safe. In fact I think we can craft our whole lives around this idea of needing to be safe. And when I say being safe, I don't just mean like avoiding danger – that's being safe right? Avoiding danger? But there's this more devastating or disastrous meaning to the phrase be safe. It doesn't just mean sometimes avoiding danger, it also sometimes means avoiding being dangerous. Sometimes being safe means keep your kids safe, protecting them. But also sometimes keeping your kids safe means making them powerless, making them harmless, making them nice. And sometimes I wonder if we believe that's what it is to be a good Catholic. To be a good Catholic is to be safe. Not just be protective, be safe in the sense of being nice, being harmless, be safe. After all doesn't Jesus even tell us He says I'm sending you out as sheep among wolves. And I think sometimes we hear that, and we think that means well I just have to take it. That means I have to roll over. That means I have to be mild. But remember who is saying it, it's Jesus who is the Lamb of God and He didn't play it safe. He wasn't harmless. Being the Lamb of God, that image in the Old Testament and the New, He's the one who sacrifices Himself. The Lamb of God is the lamb of sacrifice. Jesus is the lamb, and the lamb is courageous. The lamb is dangerous. Jesus says

they will hate me. They will hate me and kill me. What's gonna happen I am the lamb who chooses to lay down my life for those who are killing me. There's nothing harmless about the Lamb of God. And Jesus goes on to say and they hated me and that did not stop me, and they will hate you and that must not stop you either. Therefore fear no one. Again fear no one not because you're gonna be amazing, not because you're gonna be safe but for these two absolutely critical realities. Number one we have a job to do. As a Christian follower of Jesus all of us have a job to do and secondly because you matter to God. Fear no one because you have this task or responsibility, a job to do, and think these Christians that Jesus is talking to right here, they turned the world upside down. They upset the status quo. Every person in the world who believes that they've been made in the image and likeness of God, it's because of them. That they were willing to be hated. Jesus is saying fear no one because you gotta go out and you have a job to do. Catholics can't afford to be safe because the world doesn't need safe Christians right. What the world needs are Catholics who are able and willing to push back always with the spirit of God in union with Him. But trying to recreate the world again as God first imagined it. First reading from the prophet Jeremiah. Here's a prophet, you guys the people hate the prophets. People don't like prophets because prophets push back. That's why Jeremiah is lamenting here in Chapter 20. He's like what the heck! God gives me this word, and the word is to speak to the people of Judah and tell them listen exile is coming. You're all gonna lose your homes. And now everybody hates me, but you have to risk that for the sake of others. And this is the story of Jesus. He was not safe. Jesus handed His life over for the sake of others. And that's why as Catholics we can't afford to be safe. Again not merely talking about being thrill seekers, being defiant because that's my temperament, but willing to be defiant for the sake of others. And that comes at a price. And yes it's such a difficult message from Jesus to embrace in our hearts. But I just wonder if anyone who actually reads the gospel comes away thinking that your life is meant to be easy or safe. You're not reading closely. You know I used to say all the time that if you're a Christian and your life is easy, you're doing something wrong. Like people will sometimes say God will never give you more than you can handle. God will never give you more than you can handle. That's so wrong. I don't like it when people say that because yes He will. That's the point. Jesus always gives us more than we can handle because we have to stop relying on ourselves. We have to learn to rely on Him, to give our lives over. And

we do that through a consistent prayer life, being faithful to the sacraments, living the teachings of the church in their fulness. Because if we don't then we're living a Christianity that doesn't need Christ. Jesus asks us to do difficult things and that's why I love what He adds in the second part of the gospel today. He just says your Father sees you. Know this, your Father sees you. Just this powerful word of encouragement. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? You are worth so much more and your Father, He sees every one of them. And not one of them falls to the ground without Him knowing it. You're worth so much more to Him. So therefore, fear no one, why? Because you're seen by God. Therefore fear no one, why? Because you matter to God. Therefore knowing God knows you, fear no one. So last thing back to Jake Van Cedar, the man during WWII who wouldn't give a portion of his grain to the Nazi's, hid men who would not fight for the Nazi's on his farm in the Netherlands, eventually was arrested, tortured. But he said this – the worst that could happen, that's where his mind went, what's the worst they could do? The worst that could happen is that they caught me and killed me. He said but that's not too bad because then I'm with the Lord so what's wrong with that? The worst that could happen? They catch me and they kill me. He went on to say in a sense I have no fear. To be afraid, I don't even know what that is. So pause on this, imagine here is this man saying I have no fear. I don't even know what that is why? He says for I trust in the Lord. I put my trust in Him, so I have no reason to fear. One way or another He will look after me. And this part is so important, hear this, one way or another He will look after me even if it is not always exactly the way I want. Whatever happens it is the will of the Lord, so I mean that's okay with me. Jake, he survived the war, he immigrated to Canada where he raised his family. I believe he is still alive today with his grandkids and great grandkids. This man who trusts in the Lord, so he fears no one. This man who fears God, so he fears no one. How because when God matters more than anything else, more than anyone else, and you know that your actions matter, and that you matter to God, that you have no reason to fear because you have a role. You matter to God and your life's not safe therefore fear no one.

Amen