

Fr Ryan Homily 2/25/24

Read: Genesis 22:1-2, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10

One of the greatest movies ever is the Karate Kid. I love it and I'm talking about the original not the remake they did with Will Smith's kid, that's fine whatever, but you have to see the original. Cause what happens? You have this kid Danno LaRusso who moves across country from New Jersey with his mom all the way to Reseda California and at his new high school he starts to get bullied by some people from the Cobra Kai Dojo. Johnny Lawrence and a bunch of his friends. So what does Danny LaRusso do? He finds this old martial arts teacher Mr. Miyagi, asks him to teach him karate so that Danny can fight back and defend himself against Johnny and his friends. And Mr. Miyagi says okay later first do these chores - paint my fence, wax my car, sand my deck. Remember this if you saw the movie? Danny ask why. Mr. Miyagi says never mind just do it. Paint the fence like this, long strokes up and down. Wax the car like this, wax on wax off. Sand the deck like this back and forth. I guess this is just a synopsis for those who haven't seen the movie because if you haven't, like get your act together, it's awesome. Sit down and watch it; it's a gem of cinema really. But at one point Danny LaRusso gets really frustrated when weeks and weeks and weeks of these chores seemingly leading to nothing. Finally he says when am I gonna learn karate? And Mr. Miyagi says show me how you paint the fence and Danny does and it stops the karate move that Mr. Miyagi tries. Okay painting the fence was a block. Then he says show me wax on wax off and he does and it's this different karate move. My goodness karate is taught by doing household chores! Mr. Miyagi was teaching Danny karate the entire time. But Mr. Miyagi didn't tell Danny why he was having him do those chores because Mr. Miyagi wanted Danny not only to learn karate, he needed Danny to trust him first as part of the process. Being a mentor is more than saying here's the information. I need you to trust me as a person, that I have your best interest at heart even if you don't have all the information that you trust me when I ask you to do something. Because a lot of times in life a why isn't given. So here's the story we heard in the first reading today in Genesis where God says to Abraham, Abraham take your only son Isaac whom you love and go to a high mountain that I will point out to you and on that high mountain I will offer up your son as a sacrifice. And we listen to the story, and we realize there is something missing from the story. And the something that's missing from the story is a why?

God doesn't tell Abraham why I'm asking you to do this. He doesn't say here's all the information you need before I'm asking you to act. And I think a lot of us hear this story and we get stuck right here cause I don't understand and it's not understanding that stops us. Abraham wasn't given a reason, and it didn't stop him. Would it have stopped you or I? You know the story, this account, it challenges us to realize this profound truth and the profound truth is this obedience proceeds understanding. But when it comes to the Lord so often obedience comes before understanding. And I know it's really easy for a person to approach all of this, maybe looking at it through the eyes of cynicism, where someone reads this and asks was Abraham just off his rocker? Was he nuts? Like was he sitting under a tree one day was like well I do really love my son, but I really want God to know I love Him more and I put Him first, so you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna kill my son because I think the Lord would appreciate that. And the Lord just has to intervene at the last moment and say no, knock it off you crazy old man – don't do it! Is that what happened really? Cause that would be insane if it did. The answer is no that's not how it went down. In fact it says very explicitly that God spoke to Abraham. Now here's an important thing. Abraham had heard God's voice many times before this moment. Abraham had heard God speak to him so many times before this moment and every single time he did he let it go to his heart. Every single time God had shown Himself to be trustworthy. And so when Abraham hears this really hard word, it was unmistakable who it was coming from. Do you guys know who this guy Mike Rowe is? He was the host of the TV show Dirty Jobs, which I love. I don't know if it's still on, but it was great while it was. Mike Rowe I just think he's an awesome guy, really cool. Basically I wanna be his friend; he's so cool and he was doing an interview at one point with this one guy, and it go to the end and the interviewer says it's just a question I ask everybody when we get to the end of an interview. What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given? And Mike he kinda thought for a bit and he smiled, and he just said duck. And the guy says okay I need to hear the story behind that. Mike said well when I was a kid I was at a barbeque and there was a bunch of people there from the neighborhood and I was talking with my friend Charlie Baker. And as we're having this conversation, out of know where I just hear this voice shout out one word DUCK. Cause some other guys they were playing horseshoes nearby and one of the guys Kevin Rondelate, tossed a horseshoe and it went where he didn't want it to go. And

Mike said I saw that horseshoe flying at the back of my head and so he shouted out in that clear baritone voice of his duck, and I ducked. And the horseshoe hit Charlie Baker in the face and broke his nose and chipped a tooth, but it saved the back of my head. Said it's the best piece of advice I've ever been given. And Mike Rowe said it wasn't the best advice because it was excellent or life changing, he said it was the best piece of advice because it came from him at just the right time and in just the right way. Mike Rowe, he went on to say you know if you don't know the source of the advice you aren't gonna duck. But he knew where it was coming from, it was coming from his dad who he trusted. If you don't know the source of the advice you're not going to duck. And also if you try to ask the question why you're gonna get hit in the back of the head by a horseshoe because you don't have time. You gotta react, you gotta move because obedience proceeds understanding. No let me discern why first and then I'll duck – too late! And there are times for all of us with our Lord when I can't understand the process fully. I just need to trust the person now. Even when I can't understand the process I can trust the person. This is what it tells us in Romans Chapter 4 about Abraham. It says that his faith never wavered, but his trust grew. His trust grew and that's what needs to happen for all of us this Lent. His faith never wavered, but his trust grew. I can't always get bogged down by dwelling on the question why me cause we can just as easily ask the question why not me. You can't live by the motto if I know then I'll go cause with our Lord not much would happen in our lives left to trust. If we knew how it was all gonna work out we wouldn't really need Him. We wouldn't have to have a relationship with Him. And I think most of us would say well I can trust God far easier when things are going well but I don't think that's true. Cause I think what happens is when things are going well we trust the things that are going well. It's when things are not going well that reveals to us what we've been trusting, who we've been trusting. I think asking why is a really important question in life, we're supposed to. But when it becomes an obstacle for moving forward, we need to start asking a better question. And the better question when why has become an obstacle is how. The question when God is asking you to just take a step forward. Okay God I trust you. How do you want me to move forward? How are you calling me to move and trust to what You're asking in this moment? A better question then why is how. In fact we have it in the gospel today and the word isn't there, but the reality is. What's happening is they are up on this mountain, Jesus gets transfigured, His clothes are dazzling, His face

is bright and Peter, you just see this, he is freaking out. And I love this because this is in Mark's gospel. Mark's gospel is really Peter's gospel, he's getting this information from Peter himself so you can image all the times Mark has heard Peter tell this story. Like okay guys, we were up on this mountain and then this happens and I was freaking out. I started saying things that made no sense. I was so scared. I was terrified. And Mark is kinda like yeah what were you doing man that's crazy. And then what happens? The voice of the Father says this is my beloved Son, listen to Him. Basically do what He says. What is the very next thing Jesus says to do right here in the gospel? He says okay, don't tell anybody what you just saw. And the next line is so they didn't tell anyone which is kind of amazing because how many times does Jesus say in the gospel when He performs a miracle for someone or whatever. Don't tell anyone and the first thing they do is they tell everybody. It happens every single time. Except this time they actually do what Jesus asks them to do. Why? Well not why but Jesus how do You want us to respond? I want you to respond by telling no one. That makes no sense. You're right because you don't understand the process so just trust the person. You'll get it later. The transfiguration, it has everything to do with calvary and rising from the dead, which is what the disciples don't understand yet. They will understand afterwards. Don't tell anybody about this. Obedience comes before understanding. And you see when we embrace this in our hearts, it can be kinda an adventure to obedience. That trusting means I get to discover this amazing plan of God as it unfolds in my life. Finding out later what God had in mind all along. That's the adventure in obedience. Finding out what God had in mind all along. And so for us greater trust needs to be a fruit of this Lent but if I continue to get stuck on the question why I'll never move. If I ask the question how I can move. And that movement comes before seeing clearly, that trust helps obedience come before understanding. That was true for Danny with Mr. Miyagi. Do these chores we'll get to karate later. That was true for Mike Rowe with his dad, duck! It was even more true for Abraham trusting the Lord when he thought He was asking to give back his son. And now for you and for me the Lord is asking us to trust Him in our lives. Relationship first and then I can trust when obedience has to come before understanding.

Amen