31 B

Momento mori

MDP of God

There’s a story of a married couple who both die and found themselves on the beaches of heaven

And the wife said to the husband---“Isn’t heaven beautiful---nothing on earth begins to compare with the beauty here—it’s just so incredible”

And the husband kind of thoughtfully and freflectively said, “Yeh—it’s really great”

And the wife said---“And the food up here—the best food on earth tastes like dirt compared to the food here---everything is just so wonderful”

And the husband kind of thoughtfully and reflectively said—“yeah—it’s really great”

And the wife said, “And the community up here—the way everyone loves each other and supports each other and cares for one another---there’s no gossiping or backbiting---and then being in the presence of God---it just fulfills me---all my hopes and dreams and desires are just fulfilled---it’s so incredible”

And the husband kind of reflectively and thoughtfully said, Yeah—it’s really great”

And the wife said---“honey you seem to be in a lot of thought—what are you thinking about?”

And the husband said, “I was just thinking how we could have been here a lot sooner if it wasn’t for you and those bran muffins you used to make us eat”

My friends I love that story because it gets across a truth that I’ve mentioned to you many times in homilies---and that truth is that we are only here to get out of here

 This weekend we have our Lifeteen retreat going on at Camp Burton for our

 teens---and the theme is the Latin phrase--- “Momento mori

“---which is translated as “Remember, you have to die”

That might sound like a morbid theme for a youth retreat---but it is Halloween weekend

But I think it’s important to understand that many of the saints focused on their upcoming deaths---and that helped them become saints

In the back—the stain glassed window on the right as you walk out---is a window of St Helen---and you’ll notice that there is a skull on the bottom of the window

If you go into a lot of old Catholic Churches---many of the statues have skulls at the base of the statue---why? Because throughout the ages followers of Christ have focused on the fact that we have a limited amount of time here to become the people God wants us to become--- accomplish what God wants us to accomplish

And what does God want us to accomplish?---Well as Jesus taught us today—He wants us to love Him with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds and all our strength

In our 1st reading today Moses said to the people of Israel, “Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives,
all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you….”

And my friends—it’s so important to understand that the command to fear God and the command to love God ---are not contradictory

Because God isn’t calling for a craven fear---the kind of fear that a slave has for a master---the kind of fear that robs us of joy and peace

God wants us to have the kind of fear that a loving son or daughter has for a parent---the fear of letting them down—the fear of disappointing them

One of my favorite theologians—Scott Hahn---tells the story of when he was a teenager he had done some really stupid things---and he got caught

Well he came up with this lie---and the police believed him—and his mom believed him

 Well---his dad was skeptical

So at the end of the story---it became clear that his dad knew he was lying---he wasn’t able to pull off the lie

And Scott Hahn said he was prepared for his dad to yell at him—he was prepared to be grounded or have some other punishment

But all his dad did was put his head down-- shake his head---and turn and walk away

*Scott Hahn said that devastated him*—**he knew he disappointed his dad**—he knew he let his dad down

That’s the kind of fear God wants us to have---to be fearful of disappointing our Creator—disappointing the One who loved us so much that He embraced the cross and suffered a humiliating death---all so that we can be saved

My friends—when you look through the bible---we see all kinds of lies that satan uses to separate us from God

 The very first lie was **“you will not die”**

 The 2nd lie was, “God doesn’t want whats best for you”

You’ll remember satan said to the woman in the garden---You won’t die---God knows if you eat of the fruit that you’ll become like gods---that you’ll know the difference between good and evil”

In other words---satan claimed---“God is trying to limit you—God is trying to keep you from being all that you can be---*you’ll be so much better off if you ignore what He told you to do”*

And of course –our 1st parents fell for the lies---and brought sin and death into the world

Well a lie that satan uses today---that’s very much related to that 1st lie of “you will not die”---is the lie that you have plenty of time!

Satan tells us---you can become holy some day---but for now just enjoy yourself in a life of sin

And it’s a lie that we often fall for---satan convinces us that we have plenty of time---someday we can become holy---and of course the people who fall for that lie often don’t ever consider turning their lives around and seeking God

Let me just share a story—a true story—to illustrate that

As most of you know—I’m the Catholic Chaplin for Geauga hospital---so it would often happen over the years that I would visit all the Catholics in the hospital—I’d make regular rounds

So one day –I’m in the Intensive Care Unit---and I’m visiting a 93 year old man---and the man had been away from the faith for a long time---he hadn’t gone to Massfor over 40 years—hadn’t been to confession for decades

And I said to him—“I can hear your confession right now---I can give you the sacrament of the sick right now—I can give you Holy Communion right now

And the man looked up---and was thinking

 Remember—he’s 93 years old in the Intensive Care Unit

And he finally said, *“I don’t think I want to rush into anything right now”*

Had I been bolder—had I been a holier priest at the time---I should have said, “buddy, you can be rushing into hell any minute now---do you want the grace of salvation or not”

But I didn’t say that—I basically said---“okay—if you change your mind—the nurses know how to get ahold of me”---I have to tell you---I still pray for that man

But at 93 innthe ICU –he continued to believe the lie---“you have plenty of time—you don’t have to be right with God now”

My friends—many of the saints---had skulls on their desks—throughout the ages much of our religious art---in stained glass windows and statues of saints---there was often a skull at the base of the window or statue—to remind us that we will die---that we will have to give an account of our lives before God---**momento mori---***Remember you have to die*

That remembrance helped many saints to overcome their sins---it helped them live their lives for God---it helped them to live the greatest command to love God with all their hearts—all their souls – all their minds and all their strength

It helped them to live with a firm fear---that they might disappoint their Father in heaven---that they might offend the Lord who loves them so much that He embraced the cross for their salvation—that they might fail to allow the Holy Spirit to fill them with Wisdom and love

Momento mori—remember you have to die---we’re only here to get out of here

Live for God---Love God---fear offending your Father in heaven---so that you can one day meet Him face to face and enter into His heavenly home---the home He has prepared for those who choose to love Him.

Amen? Amen