

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XXXVI

Tradition is surprisingly fragile. Once a link of the chain is broken, it is extremely difficult to reattach—and if it effects a second link—almost impossible. What often happens in many disciplines is that an older generation assumes that the younger generation knows how and why certain things are done. We can see this in everything from sports practices to cooking recipes.

As we look to close out our observance of this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, we want to make certain that we sure up the fundamentals—that our resolutions to avail ourselves of the Mercy of God are effective and sustainable for the rest of our lives. To this end, we will be concluding with the very basic building blocks of a mature person—lessons that our parents drilled into us as children: the ability to say “I’m sorry” and “thank you”.

For the last few weeks we have looked at “I’m sorry” and now we turn to the ability and skill of expressing gratitude.

Authentic gratitude is very powerful. “Thank you” is ever so much more than politeness. Of course it can be said merely being polite, but everyone knows the difference. It is palpable. It comes from the heart and goes to the heart.

When someone expresses true gratitude, it has the power of so warming the heart of the recipient that it makes that person joyful in forgiving even an impossible debt. Hopefully we have all experienced something like this.

When you do something for someone or give them a gift that cannot be reciprocated and they say thank you with their heart, not just their lips, it is payment in full. You would gladly do it again not even considering the debt. I think at least part of the experience of Heaven will be something like this. Rejoicing in doing things for others just to see their gratitude, and saying “thank you” in our turn rejoicing in the other’s joy.

It is interesting to me that in the various Latin based languages, “thank you” is expressed in some form of the word for “grace”. In fact, in French, it is a derivative of the word for “mercy”. I am not enough of an etymologist to pull on those strings of thought and you would probably be bored, however, the connection of gratitude with the Divine is purposeful.

Read Luke 17:12-19. We heard this a few weeks ago at Sunday Mass. Now focus on vs 17-19. Jesus clearly converges the ideas of the expression of gratitude and Faith. (Remember, Faith is a relationship with the living God—not ‘stuff’.)

As we continue with this next week, we will look at this convergence more closely.