

HOMILY

The Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary time

July 8, 2007

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A few years back a company called Yankelovich Partners conducted a nationwide survey, the basis of which was one question: If you could ask God one question, what would it be? One-third of the people said that if they had an audience with God, they would ask why they were put here on this earth. In other words, what is their purpose in life? Would that be your question?

In today's Gospel, Jesus is instructing his Disciples about what they are to do. He says, "*Rejoice—your names are written in heaven.*" What does that tell us but that we have a purpose in life. We are not an accident. We were made and set apart for a very important task. And he said to them, "*The harvest is ready but the laborers are few, so ask the master to send out laborers for his harvest.*"

Someone wrote in to the "Ask Marilyn" column in Parade magazine and asked her the age old question: What is the purpose of our life? The questioner included his own opinion that the purpose of each individual's life is to pursue his or her own happiness and fulfillment, regardless of the means of reaching this goal. What did Marilyn, who is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as having the highest recorded IQ in the world, reply? Well, fortunately, this brilliant lady was wise enough not to give an answer. Instead, she turned the whole question around. She wrote that if there is an intelligent creator and a plan behind the creation of the universe, then our purpose is decided by our creator. But, if there is no intelligent creator behind the universe, if it all happened as the Big Bang theory says, then there is no ultimate purpose.

Did you get that? If there is no God, or if we live as if there is no God, then there is no purpose to our life. But, if there is a creator, then there is a purpose to it all—there is a purpose to our lives. For many years, the standard resource used in Catholic homes and schools was the Baltimore Catechism. It asked questions and gave answers. "Why did God make you?" And the answer was: "God made us to know him, to love him, and to serve him."

A little boy came home from church looking visibly upset. His mother asked what was wrong.

“We learned a stupid song in Sunday School today.”

“What was the song?” mother asked.

“It says Jesus wants us to be his sunbeam.”

“What’s stupid about that?” said the mother.

“Because I don’t want to be a sunbeam. I want to be a truck driver!”

Don’t buy into the idea that serving God is an either/or situation. You can be a truck driver and be Jesus’ sunbeam at the same time. No matter where you are in life, you have a holy and awesome purpose for living. Never forget that the second thing that God’s word tells us today is that ***we are special!***

God knows us. God loves us. So few of us are really known. We wear masks so much in life that no one truly knows us as we are. And, sadly, we also wear those masks when no one is around. We often don’t really know ourselves. Deep inside, we think if someone really knew us, they wouldn’t love us. But God really knows you and me—not just the clean and shiny version that you present to the world, but the real you. He knew you long before you even had the consciousness to know yourself. And God loves you! As someone once said, “God could not love you more and he will not love you less. You are special.”

A pastor was greeting parishioners after church one Sunday when a woman came up to him and caught him in a big hug. She was crying as she whispered in his ear, “Don’t ever stop telling us that we matter to God because it’s changed my life.” It’s true. It’s the Gospel truth. You matter to God. And if you truly believe that, it will change your life, too!

And one final thought. If we apply this truth to our lives, we learn the great truth that we are never alone. Admit it—there are times when you think God just created you and then dropped you into this cold, lonely, inhospitable world and left you to fend for yourself.

Max Lucado wrote a devotional about how much we mean to God. It's called

If God Had a Refrigerator.

“If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.

If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it.

He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning.

Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen.

He can live anywhere in the universe and he chose your heart.

What about the Christmas gift he gave you at Bethlehem?

Not to mention that Friday at Calvary.”

In other words, God is crazy about you. That's why God sent Jesus, God's self in human form. Jesus came to preach the good news that we are special. That we are loved. That we have a purpose. That we are not alone—God is crazy about us. And if you believe it, if you really, truly believe it, it will change your life.”