

## HOMILY

### *The Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time* *September 13, 2009*

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**Davison, Michigan**

Sometimes to persons of shallow faith the teachings of Jesus seem so clear to understand. To them, the Gospel is so easy, so simple to understand. We sometimes forget how much difficulty Jesus' teachings gave his own disciples. These were not ignorant men; these were not stupid men. And yet they were constantly asking Jesus to explain himself. When he wasn't talking in parables, he was talking in paradoxes. Now don't be put off by the word "paradox."

One young fellow listened to what the pastor was saying. Afterward, he asked his dad, "What was Father saying about ducks?"  
"I don't remember he said anything about ducks."  
The boy said, "Oh, yes he did. He said that life is a pair of ducks."  
"Oh," dad replied, "you mean paradox. I think he was talking about two medical doctors, but I'm not sure what he said about them."

Let me refresh your memory. A paradox is a statement that sounds contradictory but actually holds an abundance of truth.

One of the best known paradoxes is found in today's lesson from Mark:

*Then Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it."*

It sounds contradictory... *"Whoever loses his life...will save it."*

Albert Einstein once said that the closer you get to the truth, the more it appears to be a paradox. I don't know what paradox Einstein had in mind, but it could not be greater than this one, *"Whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it."*

Where can we go with this? When all is said and done, the tragedy of our lives is not that we will have received too little but that we will have given too little. Many of us will get to the end of life and confess, “I didn’t use all I had.” *Anything that is saved in this world will be lost.* Isn’t that the meaning of the parable of the talents? The servant took the one talent and buried it in the ground. The other two put their talents to work. *Anything you save in this world will be lost.*

This is so true with relationships. The saddest words we hear at a funeral are “I wish I had done more for him or her while there was time.” Now some of that grows out of a sense of guilt that all of us feel when we lose someone close. And often we do not need that guilt because we had a wonderful relationship with the person who has gone. But there is also that element of truth that there is so much we could give away—our love, our friendship, our time. *Anything we save we will lose.*

The person who sits around the house all the time conserving his or her energy will have less and less energy to conserve. It’s the person who sits around all the time who feels tired, not the person out vigorously living life. *Whatever you save you will lose.*

If you observe a really happy person, you will find him building a boat, writing a symphony, educating his children, teaching in P.R.E.P., serving on a commission, growing double dahlias in his garden. To find happiness we must seek it in a place outside ourselves. It is the person who has a purpose for living. It is the person who is giving of himself or herself who is the happiest. *Anything that you save you will lose.*

Which brings us to the other paradox? It is related to the first. *Anything that you share you will regain.* Think about that for a moment. *Anything that you share you will regain.*

We were created for sharing. Would you like to spend a miserable day? Go to Cedar Point by yourself. Ride the rides by yourself. See the shows by yourself. Now there is a sense in which solitude is a marvelous thing, and some of us spend our happiest moments alone. But solitude can only be enjoyed when it is balanced off with those hours we spend with someone else. *We were created for sharing.*

You who are parents know that the greatest blessing in life is not a gift your children give you; it is what you can give them that really brings happiness. We can quickly see that. When it comes to our children, it is truly more blessed to give than to receive. If we could only know ourselves to be related to all other persons on the earth in this kind of family relationship, then we would understand that always what we give ultimately is restored to us. *We were made for sharing.*

The story is told about a giant bridge that was being built across a portion of New York Harbor. Engineers were searching for a place where they could rest the mighty buttresses for the bridge, but they discovered a big problem. Deep in the mud lay an old sunken barge full of bricks and stones. It had to be moved. Yet in spite of every device used, it remained firmly embedded in the mud. At last, one of the engineers had a brainstorm. He gathered other barges around the sunken barge and chained them to the sunken vessel while the tide was low. Then everyone waited. The tide was coming in. Higher and higher the water rose; and when it did, all the barges rose, too, including the old boat mired in the mud of the harbor.

Is that not also a parable of our lives? Chained together by the love of Christ, lifted by the power of God. Experiencing the blessings of our Catholic faith only as we share it together. If we refuse to be yoked together, then there can be no lifting power.

*Anything we save we will lose.*

*Anything we share we will regain.*

