

Homily 22nd Sunday of the Year

The way you think is not God's way, but man's way. We can sympathize with Peter, because the way we think is often that way. When I was in college in 1970 to '71, the first year, we did a lot of philosophy. I knew it'd come in use sometime. And I remember we studied Galileo, and his consequences for the world, when he proved beyond reasonable doubt the Copernican theory, that the Earth revolved around the sun, and was not the center of the universe. And it had a devastating effect, because up to this point, you'd have the Renaissance, with the human form, and humanity put at it's peak, as if the top of creation, and all the beauty of the arts, and so on, and this sense of being special in the universe, that God had created the Earth, and put it in the center, and everything else revolved around it. And Galileo came along, and smashed that up, and threw things off-center. And people were devastated, because they thought the world had come to an end, and everything seemed topsy-turvy.

But that, actually, is very symbolic of a lot of things that we need to realize in Christ's teaching, because it's very true to our own lives, that we start life, don't we, as babies? Although, I must admit, I only used to pretend to be one. I was always grown up.

[laughter]

And we start life as babies, and we cry when we want something. The world centers around us. We are the center of the universe in our perception. And it slowly unravels, as we go to school, and go to work... Hopefully, unravels... That we're not the center of the universe, and that there are other people floating around, and we're not the center of their lives.

And then we have the world, don't we? The world, TV, computers, advertisements, all the paraphernalia of the modern life tells us to center on self, self-fulfillment. It's not the same as "carpe diem," seize the day, live life, but it's all about being fulfilled in self, and often in possessions, and clothing. And the reality, the shattering reality, of course, is take these things away, and our life is topsy-turvy. We don't know where we stand anymore.

And we need this Copernican Revolution, because Jesus says, "Those who try to find their life will lose it and those who lose their life will find it." That's topsy-turvy. That's a revolutionary teaching. And yet, the irony is, it's so true. When we center on self and we try to find our life, making ourselves the center of attention, we're more likely to lose people. We're more likely not to find meaning in life and to be disillusioned as the cracks appear. And the irony is, in trying to find our life by centering on self, which we all do to some degree, we get our bubble pricked now and again, and it reminds us that you can't have self-fulfillment.

But the irony, and just look at all the great people who've lived in this life, saints and non-saints, who poured out their life in service, or gave their lives to others, or put others before themselves, or offered service for the good of humanity and the community. They, in an irony, find themselves by spending themselves. They find meaning and they find fulfillment. I can think of lots of people who've come to mind to me in ordinary ways of life, who, by giving themselves, have found themselves, and that can't be taken away. It's fulfilled in Christ.

And so, even the prophet there, Jeremiah, I love that reading: "I didn't want to think about God anymore, but this burning within me..." He had a great sense of self in God, in God's call to prophesy. And so the Copernican Revolution, for us, is that we see the Son of God as the center of the universe, and that we revolve around Him and His teaching.