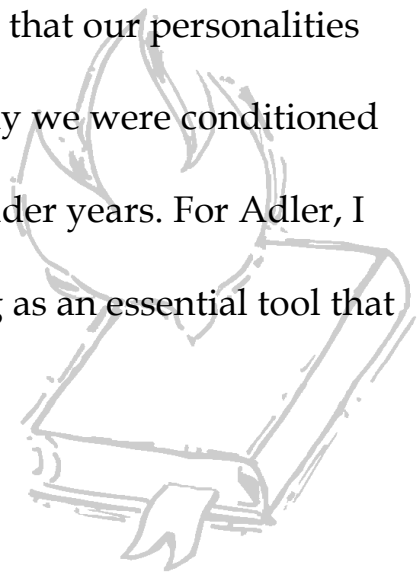


Homily
4th Sunday OT - A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
January 28-29, 2023

Zep 2: 3; 3: 12-13
Ps 146: 6-10
1 Cor 1: 26-31
Mt 5: 1-12a

So, I'm very well-versed into the psychological writings of Dr. Alfred Adler (1870-1937), a prominent expert in his respective field in the early 20th Century. Adler was a much different psychologist than, say, Sigmund Freud. Adler believed that our experiences in society and our self-worth in society influenced the way we lived. Adler believed that our social status in society influenced the way we viewed others – if we felt deficient about our self-esteem, Adler felt that we would project that onto others. If we felt strong in our self-outlook, this would influence the way we viewed others as well.

From what I understand, Adler also believed that our personalities were developed by a young age and that the way we were conditioned at a young age would carry itself through our older years. For Adler, I think that he viewed the formation of the young as an essential tool that



would influence a child later in life, thus the role of the parent and teacher was important to Adler in the way they formed that child.

The formation of children is so important. As we have been preaching this entire month and we try to do in Religious Education, our role in protecting and forming the children of today's age much take a primary role in what we do as parents commissioned to take care of those in the next generation. As we speak this weekend, our religious educators are living out the gospel message by teaching those in our confirmation program the importance of Christian service as the response to our gospel message, as the teens of our community are devoting their time to serving the pro-life community at our parish through various activities. To our catechists and all those in Christian formation, we are most grateful for their time and talent in the name of this cause.

Often the problem and challenge that we face in our society today is that the secular world seems to be forming our youth in a direction very contrary to the gospel message. I do not know if you have been keeping

up with the news, by in the city of New York, the Catholic News Agency reported that an eight-foot golden statue adorning the roof of a New York city courthouse has been described as “A Golden Medusa,” an expression and symbol supposedly of women’s empowerment and an expression of support for abortion. It closely resembles an image of a pro-abortion group dedicated to banning religion from the public square. It’s a golden-horned female that is supposed to better represent what is called “21st Century Social Morals in public spaces.” The more I read about these kind of stories that take place in New York, Chicago and other large cities throughout the country, the more I am glad I live out with all of you in the middle of nowhere.

If you have not figured this out by yourselves, many of these so-called “21st Century Social Morals” would be considered very sinful in the eyes of God and some causes against life itself purported by this movement violate the Old Testament commandment not to kill or, more appropriately, not to murder, especially in regards to the womb. In this “me-first” millennial generation, what the kids of this age often are

taught by the secular world is so contrary to the world of love and sacrifice that the judgment purported in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel hovers over any of us who chose to focus on human desires rather than God's values.

I was reflecting on this desire to follow our own guidance rather than God's in the New Testament course I am teaching this semester for the students here at the local university. In our online course this week, I have asked the students to take a set of readings from a Sunday Mass this year (each student taking a different set of readings) and then research what the teachers of the faith have told us about these readings. Now what I am about to say is not critical of the students – the whole point of teaching is to correct a student's errors and help them understand the teachings of a specific discipline – but I noticed that the students did a wonderful job of telling me what *they* thought the readings meant to them without telling me what *scripture scholars* thought they readings were trying to say.

The example I gave the students in my course as an illustration to correct their ways applied to their own individual fields of study. Imagine a student given a textbook referencing the major in college about which they are studying but do not allow the teachers to show them what the actual texts are trying to say. Imagine if you are in an operating room and a doctor is about to cut you open, telling you that everything he or she learned came from a textbook and nothing else? Would you let the doctor operate on you with such little experience? Would you do the same in regards to a lawyer, an accountant or anyone in a professional or other field who based all their knowledge on just a textbook?

The gospel of Matthew is often called “the textbook of faith,” which provides a general outline on how a good Jewish-Christian is to conduct their lives. Jesus sets the example for us in the gospel and then passes down this message to his apostles, who pass this “Deposit of Faith” down to their successors, the bishops. As we have so many commentators and scholars who help us understand what the bible is

trying to say (we call this, in a way, the “tradition” of the Church), the bishops (or “teachers,” from the Latin word “magister”) pull the traditions and scripture together to help us walk this path of life and guide us in the direction we should be walking.

So, I told the students in my New Testament class that so many teachers help guide us with the teaching of scripture that, if we choose to ignore them, then we often become lost and confused concerning what the bible is trying to say. When we do not read the bible at all, we do not even introduce ourselves to God, as if our relationship with God was not important to us at all.

The beatitudes (from the Latin word “beatus,” or blessed) are Jesus’ attempt to show us the basic way to live as a good Christian through sacrifice and care for the other over ourselves. In the fifth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus climbs a mountain with his disciples and, for three chapters, instructs them on the basic tenets of being a good Christian. These words, given to us in St. Matthew’s gospel and repeated in a different form according to St. Luke, set the parameters by

which we should live. If we are formed by these words, if we allow our teachers to help us understand what these words mean, then the way we pray, act, live and certainly *march* is guided by divine principles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For my family, this formation was given in the nightly praying of the rosary that my mother would lead around the dinner table. Each family has different customs in forming their children but form them they must if the kids have a chance to encounter God and form themselves to living like Christ. As I conclude this homily, I found online a wonderful faith practice offered by Pope Francis, who lives his faith by a “five-fingered” principle which might be a good way for all of us to condition ourselves in the way that we treat our Lord and the people that we meet. According to the Holy Father, this is how he prays in relation to his five fingers...

Pope Francis’ Five-Fingered Prayer

1. The thumb is closest finger to you. So, start praying for those who are closest to you. They are the persons easiest to remember. To pray for our dear ones is a “Sweet Obligation.”

2. The next finger is the index. Pray for those who teach you, instruct you and heal you. They need the support and wisdom to show direction to others. Always keep them in your prayers.
3. The following finger is the tallest. It reminds us of our leaders, the governors and those who have authority. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is the ring finger. Even though it may surprise you, it is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for the weakest, the sick or those plagued by problems. They need your prayers.
5. And finally, we have our smallest finger, the smallest of all. Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. When you are done praying for the other four groups, you will be able to see your own needs but in the proper perspective and you will be able to pray for your own needs in a better way.

This is our prayer.

<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=3396>