

9th Sunday of the Year A March 6, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

At this time of year I get into the movies, perhaps because it is Oscar time. This past week I watched the film *The Bucket List*. It was on T.V., I had seen it in the theater a year ago. It starred Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman, it was a touching movie but also had great humor. They were two men who had cancer and a very bad prognosis. So they drew up a bucket list, things they wanted to do before they died. In one scene they are sitting on a pyramid in Egypt, looking out at the other pyramids. Morgan Freeman, who knows a wealth of trivia, tells Jack Nicholson that in Egyptian mythology there are two questions asked of a person when they travel to heaven and try to get in. "Did you find joy in your life? And did you give joy to others during your life?" Two pretty good questions to ask ourselves.

It caused me to think of the commandments. The first three commandments are about God, and the final seven are about our neighbor. I prefer Jesus' summary of the commandments, "do you love God, and do you love your neighbor as yourself?" We often think that obeying the commandments is a chore, they are a burden. But if we look deeply at them, we come to realize that they are a blessing, a joy. We are happiest when we are loving others. Moses in our first reading said "I set before you this day a blessing and a curse, a blessing for obeying the commandments of the lord, and a curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord."

In our gospel Jesus said "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Lip service does not work, we must be people of action, of deeds. Jesus then went on to say that if we act on His words, we are like the man who built his house on rock, if we do not act on His words, we are like the man who built on sand.

We are about to enter the two most important seasons of our liturgical season, Lent and Easter. Tuesday evening we celebrate Mardi Gras, a time of feasting. We have a Mardi Gras planned for Tuesday evening beginning at 5:30 p.m., plenty of food and fun for the family. We will also burn the palm branches from this past year to prepare them for the giving of ashes this coming Ash Wednesday. I call your attention to the monitor in the atrium which has pictures of some of our youngsters and seniors receiving the ashes. The ashes in the form of a cross represent our commitment to turn more fully to the Lord during this holy season. I encourage you to participate in mass and receive the ashes this Wednesday.

Alms giving is always a part of this season. A parishioner will speak about the Heifer program that our parish will participate in this year. We are having a mission this Lent, on the evenings of the first four Sundays of Lent, beginning next Sunday. The same program will also be given at St. Francis on Monday evenings. The theme is the Healing Power of Forgiveness. I ask those on the end of the pews to pass down the card reminder of this program, with the titles of each evenings program. We are offering childcare and a program for children, it is important that you RSVP. How the world needs forgiveness, how we need forgiveness in our lives. Please join us for this program.

Lent begins this week. What are we going to do during this holy season to draw closer to the Lord?