

- Our epistle today call us to be in union with one another, to be of one mind, having compassion on one another, and not rendering evil with evil, but returning a blessing for a curse.
- And our Gospel warns us about anger, telling us to put aside any anger we have with our brother and be reconciled with him, for holding onto anger can put our salvation in peril.
- The essence of these readings is that we seek peace with all people, treating others with true charity and respect, being just in all of our dealings, and cultivating within ourselves the virtues of meekness, magnanimity, and a ready forgiveness.
- For living in this way is how we please God and render Him the proper thanks for all He has done for us.
- The goal of living our Catholic faith in this life is to get to Heaven in the next life! I hope that none of you ever forget what a tremendous blessing it is to be Catholic, for Catholicism offers to man the only sure path to Heaven.
- This is because it is only within the safe pastures of God's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church that man is given the fullness of truth!
- Because this is so, the Catholic Church is necessarily large and diverse, and the Catholic faith is adaptable to all languages and cultures. People from all races, nations, cultures, and ethnicities are found within the Catholic Church. That is as it should be.
- Of course there is a body of beliefs that must be held in order to be considered Catholic, and there are right and wrong ways to be Catholic and to practice Catholicism.
- Part of being a mature Catholic is knowing what one *must* believe and do, what one *may* believe and may do, and what one simply *cannot* believe or *cannot* do in order to be fully Catholic.
- In other words, there is a minimum standard of what one must believe and do in order to be fully united to the Catholic Church. Every Catholic is obliged to ensure that he or she is meeting this objective, minimum standard in order to receive Holy Communion.
- But when it comes to practicing our Catholic faith, we really must strive to please God rather than just ensure that we're meeting minimum standards of belief and practice.
- God is always more pleased when we do things simply to please Him rather than trying to check off boxes to ensure that we're not displeasing Him.
- As a priest I find that as people grow more serious about their practice of the Faith and grow deeper in love for God, it's natural for them to become more rigorous and thoughtful in the standards they set for themselves in practicing the Faith.
- And this is good. God wants us to be thoughtful in how we practice our Faith. He wants us to be zealous and demanding on ourselves. He loves our little, quiet devotions that we practice out of love for Him.
- But as we do this, as we become more thoughtful in the details of practicing our Faith and more zealous and rigorous with ourselves, it is terribly important that we don't become proud, pharisaical, or in any way judgmental of others.
- While it is a spiritual work of mercy to admonish sinners, it is not a spiritual work of mercy to admonish those whose practice of the Faith does not rise to the standards we set for ourselves and think that every other Catholic should have for themselves.
- I bring this up – sadly – because occasionally I am made aware of posts on Facebook and other public places on the internet in which some St. Ann's parishioners make rather harsh judgments about others who don't share their views on things such as the wearing of mantillas to Mass, how

best to receive Holy Communion, proper dress for Mass, Catholic schools vs. homeschooling, and the Latin Mass vs. the *Novus Ordo* Mass.

- To be perfectly frank, I find this type of behavior boorish, sophomoric, and uncharitable. What bothers me the most is that we've had members of this parish leave St. Ann's because they've found some of our other parishioners judgmental and condescending.
- While it is perfectly normal for each of us to have our preferences when it comes to how we worship and how we practice our Faith, we must be willing to allow for a certain diversity of practice in others, especially if what they're doing is allowed by the Church or if what they're not doing is not required by the Church.
- As Catholics we can have legitimate differences of opinion on whether or not to wear a mantilla, whether to receive on the tongue or in the hand, whether our children go to Catholic school, public school or home school, and whether we shall worship in the ordinary form or extraordinary form of the Mass.
- Holy Mother Church gives us options on these matters.
- While we may not like all the options Holy Mother Church gives us, and while some options may be objectively preferable to other options, we have to be patient and respectful of those who may have different opinions.
- Moreover, I do not want a caste system mentality here at St. Ann's, where some consider themselves better Catholics than others.
- So as we consider the readings today, I ask each of you to search your hearts and examine how you treat other Catholics who may not practice the Faith in the way that you do. Are you compassionate, merciful, modest and humble as you should be?
- Or have you in any way contributed to a sense of division in this parish?
- If you want to help someone come to a deeper and richer understanding and practice of the Faith, then talk to them charitably rather than making an angry post on Facebook.
- If we fail to do that, then our righteousness surely does not surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees – and that has implications for our eternal salvation.
- As St. Peter tells us today, have compassion on one another, being lovers of brotherhood, merciful, modest, and humble – most especially with our fellow parishioners. For these are the virtues that win people over!
- There is an old maxim that has been attributed to many different Christian sources that says, “in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” And I think it applies here.
- In our zeal to please the Lord, may we be zealous to treat all others with true charity and respect, trusting that our loving concern for our fellow parishioners will be what is most pleasing to our Lord and help us all to grow in holiness.