

32nd Sun, in Ord. Time (A-4) (Sangre) **Keeping our end in mind.**

Wisdom, the Bible's feminine image of God, searches for all who wish to have her, just like love does. Wisdom and love can be found everywhere, but they are a mystery. Wisdom can come when we least expect it. Have you ever heard of an ethical will?

Some Jews from WWII coped with their losses by writing "ethical wills." When they realized that everything of value had been taken away and that they'd have nothing left to give to their children and to posterity, they wrote wills that stated who they were, what they valued in life, and the values they prayed their children and grandchildren would want to know. Many of these "wills" were then stored in the basement of their synagogue, and were later discovered after the war had ended. (paraphrased from "Living with the end in mind," Dynamic Preaching, Vol. XX, 2005, pg. 56)

If we were to write our own ethical will, would what we write match the way we value and live? Would it say who we are, whose we are and for whom we are here to serve? The Jewish writers, knowing that their end was coming, trimmed the oil of their life's lamps so their children and grandchildren could have a testament of their loved one's light. They did what Steve Covey said in his: 7 Habits of highly effective people. He said we are to "live with the end in mind." (ibid) Do we live that way?

In the 1800's men who were renovating the Washington Monument found a strange graffiti. It says: "Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to one's own memory more lofty and enduring than this."

(Paraphrased from "What makes a person successful?" Dynamic Preaching, Vol. XIV, 1999, pg. 28)

To live with the end in mind is to leave a monument worth leaving behind. An ethical will is a monument based in the faith that we are making a difference that we have lived at all. We must remember that Jesus said, "the greatest among you shall be your servant." There is no greater monument than knowing you made a difference in another's life.

We have been praying for 8 days now. At our 1st Mass together I asked that we all pray for each other and that we prepare to make a difference. We gather to break bread after hearing God's ethical will left to us in the Scriptures. Jesus left behind parables like that of the wise virgins awaiting the groom to call us to reflect on our readiness. To be ready is to have our own ethical wills in order with our end in mind.

Wisdom and love make up the oil we celebrate today. By nurturing, understanding, listening, healing and forgiving each other in new ways, we build up monuments more lofty and enduring than any physical monument to humankind. We are creative men and women, old and young, gay and straight. We are called to use our creativity to keep love alive and growing in our hearts.

Ethical wills and spiritual monuments are ways of showing that we are wise and ready servants. The next 40 or so days you have left are to prepare you to write your own ethical will, not for your personal children but for any child God entrusts to your care. You will prepare for ministry and possibly a new assignment for that ministry. Ministry carried out in love of others is the way to live with our end in mind.

As St. Paul says, let us get caught up together with those who have died before us, learning from their Wisdom, so that we will always be with the Lord, whose ethical will we will always have with us, even to the end of our time.