

21st Sunday in Year C
Con Foley

Lectionary 123:

Isa 66:18-21

Ps 117:1, 2

Heb 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

Possible preaching themes:

- Watch out for complacency in the Christian life. Those who listen and act will not fall into complacency.
- There is no automatic membership to the kingdom of God. It is not an exclusive club accessed through inheritance or a one-time subscription fee.
- There is need to focus, lifelong discipline and to act in the right way. There is a need to be pro-active in the Christian life; to watch out for opportunities to serve, to take the initiative and to “proclaim the Good News.”

Possible scientific resources:

- **The story of the Regent Honeyeater:** <https://nyti.ms/300FhFl>, and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56417544>

Summary of articles: The Regent Honeyeater, an avian species found in Southeast Australia, is on the verge of extinction. A study by the Australian National University in Canberra has found that there are only about 300 birds left, a huge drop from the 1,500 counted about 40 years ago. Researchers have found one key reason for the drop - the young male Regent Honeyeaters didn't learn the song; they lost the tune. This species has distinctive songs. Some young male birds could no longer find older ones to teach them the specific songs of their species, so the younger ones mimic the songs of other species. However, the female Honeyeaters aren't attracted by unfamiliar melodies and the courtship ritual doesn't fly. For the female Honeyeaters *no other tune will do*, and the evolutionary business is stalled. The loss of the song is what the researchers call a “precursor to extinction.” Knowing the song is needed for life.

- **The Mission of the Nasa Dart Spacecraft:** [Nasa Dart asteroid spacecraft: Mission to smash into Dimorphos space rock launches - BBC News](#), and <https://www.nasa.gov/planetarydefense/dart>

Summary of Articles: In November 2021 Nasa launched the Dart Spacecraft (via a Falcon 9 rocket). This is the first scientific mission with the purpose of testing technology aimed at deflecting an asteroid. This method of planetary defense against near earth objects is known as the Kinetic Impactor Technique. The plan is to crash the Dart spacecraft into a 160-meter-wide space object called Dimorphus. The collision is set to happen in September 2022 when Dart reaches its target and will be travelling at 15,000 miles per hour. Space scientists hope that the impact of the crash will cause a shift of just 1% in the orbit of Dimorphus. This 1% change would be a success, as the ability to cause a change in trajectory by this small amount could be sufficient to one day save the earth from the catastrophic effects of being hit by a dangerous asteroid. Even little changes can have great consequences.

Homily outline:

- Chapter 13 of the Gospel of Luke contains a few parables, stories and instructions that make clear that a true disciple should not be presumptuous or complacent in matters of faith. Christians need to be in tune with Christ and be pro-active (“Strive to enter through the narrow gate”) to ensure that we are not outside “the locked door.”
- **What do we need to do? What is Jesus’ door policy?** We enter the narrow door each time we choose Christ: when we choose to love, take a moment to pray, set aside time to meet Christ in the Eucharist, when we try to listen to his words through studying Scripture or spiritual reading, when we make sacrifices to help someone in need, when we choose to do the right thing, when we tell the truth, when we forgive.
- **Jesus’ tune is distinctive:** The melody reveals God’s presence. When we listen to Christ in prayer, find direction from His promptings, act according to His instructions, and share the Good News, then we keep the tune alive. This is both an individual and communal responsibility. We need to listen to each other and sing together. As the song goes “All God’s creatures have a place in the choir, some sing low and some sing higher”
- **Are there any concrete steps we need to take to be more attentive to Christ’s tune?** What changes do we need to make? Where can we take the initiative? It may be just one small spiritual or practical action. Remember, even little changes can have great consequences.
- **Conclusion:** The Christian life is a song of love. We know from our own experience that human love is life giving, but divine love is profoundly life giving. The Good News is a tune that inspires courage and builds community. While the loss of the song is a precursor to extinction, the singing of the song leads to the abundance of life. Keep singing Christ’s song - no other tune will do.

- **A prayer to help us tune in to God** Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend, and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day.
Amen. (St. Richard of Chichester)

Tags: discipleship, meteorite, ornithology, song, space

About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.

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