

Life is what happens while you are waiting to die. Sad but true, that is what some people think. They wake up Monday morning knowing there are five more days until the weekend. They wake up Saturday morning knowing that there are only two days until they go back to work. They go to work each day knowing that there are only eight more hours until they can go home. They get home knowing they have four hours until bedtime. Eight hours of sleep and they wake up and start all over again. And they do this until suddenly it all stops. "Life is what happens while you are waiting to die."

So it is important to make the most of the life you've been given.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that at some point the physical universe will cease to function properly. The sun will darken; the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven. The end of everything will occur. Heaven and earth will pass away. What will remain are you and God.

Because God is God and because the end of everything has occurred, you will come before God in a way that was totally impossible when the universe still existed and time controlled when things happened. In this moment, God will see you as everything you ever thought, said or did. In a moment you will be everything you ever were, all at the same time, one complete you.

Each thought, deed and word will be like a tiny pixel that, when combined with the other billions and billions of pixelated thought, words and deeds, will form a picture of the real you. The you you became in that time you spent waiting to die.

Putting a new spin on an old Baptist question, "If you were to die tonight, do you like the picture of you that will appear before

God?" And, if not, are you ready and willing to change it?

Let's do a little exploring. Forget about the billions of pixels that make up the complete picture of the real you. Instead, try to pick out one life situation which, if you could, would be the one life situation that you would want everyone to know: a moment that represents you at your best. If you were to be remembered for all of eternity for just one thing, what would it be? For all of us somewhere, at some time, did something for someone that contains some virtue, some character or ideal that we still admire. I do not care if you have to recall all the way back to sharing your lunch with the new kid in the third grade, you admire yourself as you were in that moment.

If you want to be a better you today, you need to get in touch with the good that is already present in your soul. You may not be able to duplicate the good deed from the past - - handing out candy bars at the school playground will probably get you more trouble than you are willing to take on -- but you can duplicate the kindness, the charity, the goodness that is in you and channel it into action today.

The easiest change you can make in yourself is really not a change at all but a re-awakening of dormant goodness asleep inside of you. Looking into the past can be helpful to discover how grace and opportunity worked together successfully. Dreaming dreams and raising aspirations for the future can help you grow in new directions. Ask yourself what you would do if you suddenly became fabulously wealthy. With all the money you could need and twice as much to spare - who would you help? If you were no longer restrained by the need to earn a living every day, who would you give your time? →

That flame of desire to help, which you feel beginning to kindle, is the Holy Spirit at work in you. And in thinking about what you would do, you recognize that there is a dark place that needs light. A rough place that needs to be made smooth. A mountain that needs lowering. A valley filled. A crooked road made straight. You see a need, you recognize it, but you do not have a billion dollars, and you do have a job. Would you help if you had \$500 million? What if you had \$50 million? How about \$1 million? One-half a million dollars? A few thousand dollars?

What is stopping you from giving something of whatever you have right now? It is what you want to do!

As for time, for many people it is harder to find that money. If you cannot give one day a week, or a half a day a week, can you give one day a month, or half a day a month? Can you give a day each quarter, or half a day each quarter? How about a day every six months, or half a day?

It is what you said you wanted to do to make you a better person.

My last words will be about Grace. None of us can be better than we are without grace.

Last week we heard in the Gospel how the King will separate the people as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The people will be judged by whether they fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked or visited the sick and imprisoned. We hear the Gospel and we fear that we have rejected the Lord's call to care for the least of these. We are not a better person because we are not doing enough.

More often than not, our failure is not in the doing but in the receiving. We forget that Jesus said, "Do not be afraid, little flock,

for it is you Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom of Heaven." Before we can fail to do, first we fail to receive the grace God wants to give us... "good measure, pressed down shaken together, running over and placed in your lap."

The change you want to make can only be made by the grace of God. You have to be willing to receive in order to be changed. Prayer and the Sacraments are the first place to go in making a change for a better you.

With God's help there is not anything that you cannot accomplish. With Grace you can be everything God created you to be: living an abundantly fruitful life in the time before you die.

Amen.