

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

July 14, 2018 5 PM Mass [Text in green font preached at that Mass](#)

July 15, 2018 8 AM Mass [Text in gold font preached at that Mass](#)

July 15, 2018 10 AM Mass [Text in blue font preached at that Mass](#)

Fr. Joseph Bambenek

Church of St. Pius X, White Bear Lake

Amos 7:12-15

Psalm 85

Ephesians 1:3-14

Mark 6:7-13

It is good to see a number of unfamiliar faces at Mass this morning. Welcome again to St. Pius... I would suspect that a number of you are here because you are travelling... and perhaps you are finding the advice of Jesus to pack lightly to be particularly relevant. I must admit that I'm not good at packing light. I remember 27 years ago on this weekend I was in Finland, carrying around more luggage than I should have been on my excursion, and Jesus' words seemed especially fitting... although I still have not been able to figure out the light packing thing. Once again welcome, and know you are always welcome back.

[I won't ask you to take a vote as to who will sing this better, me or Andrea:](#)

Sing: Lord, let us see your kindness; Lord, let us see your kindness

Late October of my last year of college was one of the lowest times in my life before I entered seminary. A few days before Halloween I had to make the four hour drive from Kirksville, Missouri, where my undergraduate school was located, to St Louis for a meeting. As I made my way through what is truly rural Missouri, I approached the town of Edina... [Edina Missouri is not like Edina Minnesota...](#) and noticed, in the distance a beautiful church. There are not very many Catholics in that part of Missouri so such an impressive structure was especially unexpected in this small farming town. When I got to town, I followed the steeple and made my way to the church ... I was all the more excited when it turned out to be St. Joseph's Church... [given my patron saint...](#) and thankfully, the door was unlocked. I will spare you all the details, but I was amazed by the great beauty of what I found inside. When I was about to leave, I took a moment to kneel and pray about the matter that was weighing on my heart. As I turned to get out of the pew, I looked up to the balcony and my eyes went straight to this sign: "Be Kind and Patient." [At this point at the 5 PM and 8 AM Masses an altar server, on cue, turned the banner around (it matched relatively well the other green banners... at the 10 AM Mass I turned it around)]. [Thank you, Andrew, for showing it to us.](#)



It was one of those providential moments in life in which it seemed that God was speaking right to me. It buoyed my spirits, and although I continued to struggle, it helped to give me hope that God was there for me... and that I just needed to, well, be patient and kind. So when I got back from the meetings a few days later, what did I do? I made a sign, although

much smaller, like this one and hung it in my dorm room. In fact, for a number of years I had a “Be Patient and Kind” sign hanging in my various dorm rooms and ultimately apartment bedroom. It continued to serve as a reminder that God is with me... and that when things are hard it is important, at least for me, to be patient and kind. Perhaps for others, there are different ways that God wants us to handle life’s difficulties.

Before I get to the main part of the homily let me share with you one other story... Fast forward 17+ years... After I was ordained I celebrated more Masses of Thanksgiving than anyone I know<sup>1</sup> because there were so many special places to me like St. Joseph’s on my journey to the priesthood... One Sunday I celebrated the two Masses at [the campus my alma mater’s Truman State Newman Center](#). The next morning my parents, [who were along with me](#), and I drove out to Edina where I celebrated the 8 AM Monday Mass at St. Joseph’s and I told this story in the homily.<sup>2</sup> Well, later that day [as we were making our way back to Minnesota](#), I got a phone call from the Deacon or the Deacon’s wife... After Mass they dug through the storage room, found this sign and asked if I wanted it. So now, when I am not displaying it at Mass, the real one hangs in my bedroom in the rectory. [Thank you Seth for turning it around for us](#).

This story came to mind as I was reflecting upon today’s responsorial psalm, [which Nancy sang for us so beautifully](#). In it, we heard several attributes of the Lord being listed, and even connected together. For instance we heard that justice and peace are connected in God. We also hear that kindness and truth are paired [like a kiss](#). [In fact, Nancy, did you sing that justice and peace kiss?](#) Which is what then got me thinking about my story of kindness and patience [being connected](#).

In the responsorial psalm and in what I sung from it, we ask God to show us His kindness. But then that can get us to wonder: How does God show us His kindness? I would suggest that there are multiple ways He does that. One [general category](#) of them is that He can inspire us to see the kindness He places in the world. That is what happened to me in October 1992 in Edina. Although I had a long drive still ahead of me, I felt inspired, when I saw the church spire, to check it out. And then, when I had just finished praying about something, it was like God directed my eyes straight to the banner. An immediate answer to my prayers. I could have looked anywhere in the church, but my eyes went right to the sign that I had not noticed before. It was a very kind act for God to give me the gift of seeing it. In that scenario, one could say that God was rather active in showing me His kindness, but it still required my cooperation. I still needed to have my eyes open [and be willing to follow God’s promptings](#). I had to be willing to divert my path to see the Church. I had to be willing to pray about what was bothering me, even in my time of darkness.

More often, I would suspect, God reveals His kindness in the world through other people. Which is why we need to be reminded to be kind and patient. My post-ordination trip to Edina is a great demonstration of that. The Deacon and his wife certainly did not have to go through the trouble of looking for, let alone giving me the sign. They did not know me. They have not seen me since. But it was a genuine act of kindness to think of me, to reach out to me, and then to even send it to me.

[On a more global scale](#), it<sup>3</sup> is a reminder that we, each one of us, is created in God’s image. A reminder that each one of us, as an image of God, is uniquely designed to reveal things about God to the world. Today’s responsorial psalm would lead us to think that among the

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<sup>1</sup> To see the list of where I celebrated Masses of Thanksgiving, why I went there, and downloads of the homilies I preached go to: <http://www.frjoeordination.info/index.cfm?fa=downloads>

<sup>2</sup> To read the homily see: <http://www.frjoeordination.info/customers/94018/StJoesEdinaFinal.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> This way of God revealing His kindness

things we should reveal to the world are God's kindness paired with truth. That is an interesting pair if you think about it. We are not acting in a God-like way when we separate kindness and truth. That means that when we speak the truth, but don't attempt to express the truth, especially truths which may be hard to hear, in a kind way, we are not imaging God well. This means that if we tell a lie, thinking that we are being kind by misleading someone, that is not imaging God. After all, we probably all know that it can be very tempting to tell lies to avoid hurting other people's feelings. It can be tempting to tell people the unvarnished truth, without considering how they will take it. [And we can be more prone to doing that](#) especially when we think we are acting out of justice. Once again, notice that justice and peace are tied together. That is not as big of a surprise because of the old saying: no justice, no peace. But if we are so focused on pursuing justice that we forget to be kind, that we forget to be truthful, there will also not be any peace.

But then this could prompt us to ask the question: what does it mean to be kind? While we likely all have a sense of what it means to be kind, I had actually never looked up what it means until I was preparing this homily. Webster's dictionary says that being kind is to be of sympathetic, helpful or forbearing nature. I realize this may seem a bit like a tangent, but it is not... Even before I reflected on this weekend's readings the topic of kindness has also been on my mind. The reason for my thinking of kindness is that, as those who attend daily Mass know, this past week I was on a four day "vacation." I put vacation in quotes because one of the objectives of the time away was to get more progress made on the Healing the Whole Parish retreat. While away, I met with three current or former members of the faculty at Franciscan University of Steubenville. One of them suggested I read *The Healing Power of Kindness*, Kenneth Wapnick. When I looked it up on-line, I discovered there are actually two books by him with that title... Book 1 deals with Releasing Judgement<sup>4</sup> and Book 2 about Forgiving Our Limitations. [Such as when I forget two of the four things I intended to say at the start of Mass.](#) I have not read them yet but will likely order soon. .

[To tie this all together](#), But what this does lead me to believe, and it really should not be surprising, is that when we are sympathetic to others and sympathetic to ourselves, when we are helpful to others, when we withhold saying negative things that don't need to be said or restrain others from harming a third person, it can only but be healing for everyone involved.

My sisters and brothers, we are entering into this new week. The forecast looks pretty good. As we enjoy the lovely July weather that God will be giving us, [according to the weather people](#), may we also seek to enjoy the warmth He wants to give us, and to reflect to others, through kindness. Even in our times of darkness, even when we feel like we are being pummeled like Thursday's evening's rains, may we ask for God's kindness. May we do so with confident expectation that God wants to be kind to us, and wants us to be kind to ourselves and others. May we look for the ways that He wants to directly inspire us to see His kindness. May we see the kindness in the actions of others. And may we be good images, of the God who created us in His image by showing His kindness to others. May we seek to be kind...may we remind ourselves of the importance of being kind... even if that means making a sign to remind us... and may we ask God's help for us to be kind... May we do this realizing that being kind, then, is one more way that we can participate, that we can cooperate with God in bringing the healing love of Jesus to others in our daily lives. One way that we can help answer the plea of others when they pray to God [today's responsorial psalm](#),  
Sing: Lord let us see your kindness, Lord let us see your kindness

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<sup>4</sup> ISBN: 978-1591421474