

Homily for the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)
St. Joseph's Neier November 16-17, 2013
Rev. Kevin Schmittgens

Central Idea: What is the point of gossip? Just do your work and be quiet!

We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.

Are you ready for some gossip?? Here are the burning issues of the gossip pages this week: (By the way, these are the ones suitable for church)

Item One: Listen very closely. Khloe Kardashian has important advice to offer. When taking a selfie, "you have to have the camera up above you, down below gives you too many double chins." Good to know.

Item Two: Believe the tabloid cover, people: Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart may totally be getting married! According to the latest issue of In Touch Weekly, there is no debating the status of this formerly estranged couple. "They are inseparable and 100 percent back on," Whew!

Item Three: Yes, Miley Cyrus smoked marijuana on stage at the 2013 MTV European Music Awards. Video of the singer's actions while accepting the trophy for Best Video went viral almost immediately, but many questions whether the joint in Miley's lips was real because... come on. Who does that?!? But in an interview yesterday with UK's Capital FM radio station, Cyrus confirmed her legitimate (legal) drug use at the ceremony. "I was just walking out of my room and then I was like, 'Oh, I have this in my bag. That will be really funny,'" said Miley, explaining the move as random and spontaneous. Sure...

Had enough? Oh one more...Item Four: Zac Efron broke his jaw and gashed up his face so badly that he required stitches and his jaw is now wired shut, yet there was no 911 call after his fall. No one was notified after the actor fell in a puddle Sunday and hurt himself badly, making the mishap even more puzzling than it had been initially. Given that Zac Efron was in rehab twice this year for cocaine abuse, and has also had problems with Molly, staying sober has not been easy for him. It's strange that any injury or freak accident bad enough to warrant the kind of treatment he received didn't warrant a 911 emergency or a call for help. Also, the puddle-slipping excuse - with the water allegedly pooling up outside his front door - and Efron landing on his mouth seems a little far-fetched. While it's not clear if anything suspicious is going on, or if Zac is again struggling with addiction or if that played into this at all ... it does make you wonder.

You know what makes me wonder...why we are so captivated by all of this nonsense. There are people who make billions of dollars in an industry that is just basically a load of hot air. And for what purpose? What possibly could be the reason for this drive!

In our second reading today, Paul reminds us to avoid all of the gossip, avoid wasting your time with other people's bid-ness (as the kids might say). "We hear that some of you are not keeping busy, but are acting like busybodies." Paul's response: shut up and just work. Even though it was written 2000 years ago, Paul's admonition still applies, now more than ever.

The reason is simple. It is a waste of time. I like this quote:

*There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it hardly behooves any of us
To talk about the rest of us.*

In other words, everyone, and I mean everyone, can be and often are targets for gossip. The Miley's of our world use it to promote themselves. The rest of us, well, we are just fodder for other people's amusement. And it doesn't matter how good or bad you are.

Another author wrote:

"Never tell evil of a man, if you do not know it for certainty, and if you know it for a certainty, then ask yourself, 'Why should I tell it?'"

That is the bottom line, who is getting served by this talk? Why should I tell it? There may be times, for instance at school, that we need to talk about a student, to figure out how we might help him or her or to help someone understand what is happening in this or that student's life. But sometimes, if I am honest, I am just telling the story because it makes me look good, or it makes me look funny, or it makes me look better than I really am. Why should I tell it? should be at the forefront of any believer's mind before we tell or repeat anything about anybody.

Most of the time we gossip because, face it, it is fun. The writer Dorothy Parker famously said that: if you do not have anything good to say about someone...come her and sit next to me. We get strange pleasure sharing the travails and tribulations of others. The Germans called it Schade Freude and it may be the reason we are so apt to listen to rumors and gossip and hearsay about others.

We would do well to listen to St. Paul, be quiet (Paul wouldn't say shut up) and just do our work.

As I was working on this homily, I stumbled upon two great words that describe this: gossipmonger and rumormonger. There is something about the term monger, literally a peddler of petty and shameful things, that is very disturbing.

It reminds that a monger is something I definitely do NOT want to become.

No matter what happens to Khloe, or Miley, or Robert and Kristen or Zac.