

October 29, 2017 – 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time -- Year A
A Saint in the Making

When you entered church today you received a name tag.

The name tag gave you a job title: "A Saint in the Making."

Well, now we get some job coaching!

Are you ready, Team?

Let's see what kind of coaching we can get today from Moses, from St. Paul and from Jesus.

In our first reading Moses reported guidance he received from God.

Namely, give special care to:

- Aliens
- Widows
- Orphans
- The poor who borrow money from you

Why? Because the Israelites were expected to become like God ... and God tells us that he is compassionate.

As a "Saint in the making" we too should be compassionate to aliens, widows, orphans and the poor.

OK - we got it!

In the second reading St. Paul compliments the Thessalonians because they "became imitators of us and of the Lord".

Yes, by their actions they had become a model for all the believers.

They had even spread the Good News to the areas adjacent to them in northern Greece, to their neighbors in Macedonia and Achaia.

So, they led a good Christian life and that had gotten the attention of their neighbors.

So, the coach is telling us to lead a good Christian life and be an example to the whole state of Michigan!

OK, Team, what's our message from the Gospel?

Jesus sorted it all out for the people of his day and of our day. He reminded them and us that there may be 613 Commandments and Laws written in the OT but it all boils down to these two commandments:

One: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Two: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

[Ushers: please pass out the cards]

Yes, Jesus, our Lord, our ultimate coach tells us not to hold back our love and care for God and for our neighbor.

Jesus, our coach tells us to focus.

Jesus, our coach tells us to not get off target.

Here's a visual to help us picture our target and to provide us with a reminder of how we can get to that target.

There's a color code chart at the right of the target/bullseye.

The red area at the outer edge of the target consists of all 365 "Thou shalt not" Laws and Commandments from the Old Testament.

You might well remember that 8 of our Ten Commandments were of the "Thou shalt not..." variety.

"Thou shalt not kill."

"Thou shalt not steal."

They are still on the target but are not the center!

The next ring on the target, the yellow band, consists of all 248 positive commandments and laws, like:

"Keep holy the Sabbath" and "Honor your father and mother."

It was these two rings of commandments and laws that the Pharisees were challenging Jesus about.

Jesus, our coach, replied, "No, aim for the middle of the target - love God and love your neighbor."

The green band in the target contains some excellent ways for us to live a saintly life, namely the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Mercy? Yes, being like our compassionate God who Moses reported on back in our first reading.

Yes, that sums up our direction from our coach, Jesus.

Our coach, Jesus, inspired many people over the last 2000 years. Over time, some people have been so good at following the coach's direction "to aim for the center" that people around them appealed to have them officially classified as saints.

Let's look at some with familiar names.

(These names are from different parishes and communities who form today's Corpus Christi parish, our home parish.)

Mary, as in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was there at the death of Jesus and "**bore wrongs patiently**" and "**buried the dead**".

St. Alexander was the Patriarch (Bishop) of Alexandria in northwest Egypt in the early 300's.

St. Alexander has been praised as "a man held in the highest honor by the people and clergy, magnificent, liberal, eloquent, just, **a lover of God and man [right on target!]**, devoted to the poor, good and sweet to all, ... "

During the Council of Nicaea he "**Admonished the sinner**", Arius, the heretic that claimed Jesus was not divine!

In the year 654 there was a man who became Pope Eugene I.

He had been a priest in Rome where he was known for his charity and his sanctity.

"Feed the hungry" and "Clothe the naked".

St. Eugene died in 657.

St. Gerard lived from 1726 to 1755, dying when he was only 29 years old.

St. Gerard was often called on by the poor and the sick.

He is well known for his prayers for women who were pregnant, especially when they were in labor.

The artwork on the front of our church building is a tribute to him and his ministry: **"Comforting the sorrowful" and "Visiting the sick."**

St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita died near the end of WWII in 1947.

She was born in Sudan in 1869 but was kidnapped and enslaved when she was only 8 years old.

Taken to Italy as a slave she was freed by their courts.

Unfortunately, that was only after 13 years of being a slave.

Yes, she was **"bearing wrongs patiently."**

The Daughters of Charity were very influential on her and she became a Catholic and joined their order.

She led a simple life but was part of the formation of new sisters for going to Africa. **"Instructing the ignorant."**

During WWII the people in her little town in northern Italy regarded her as their protector.

Bombs fell on their village but not one citizen died.

Five saints, two women and three men, are great examples of getting closer to God by living out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

There, then, is what our coach, Jesus, is expecting of us as well!

Us, the *saints in the making!*