

Don't leave your gift on the table!

I find it affirming when people tell me that they remember something from a homily.

First of all ... it **shows that** they were listening in Mass ...what a great thing ...
and then by listening ... they were touched by something that was said
to the degree that they've held onto it and remember it.

That's **the goal of preaching** ... that **each and every person** would listen ...
and walk away with some image or insight or inspiration or instruction ...
that would live on in their hearts and assist them in growing
their relationship with God and others.

Over the years, our Parishioner, **Joyce Friedrich**, has let me know when a homily touches her. **But then, she'll** always say,
"You know what my favorite is ... the one about leaving the Donut on the Desk!"

Do you remember that one?

Leaving donuts on the Desk was **the Life Image** I used in a homily 6 years ago ...
and it continues to hold a meaningful place in **Joyce's mind** ...
and perhaps in your mind too.

Well, I'm going to use that same Life Image today because it has a beautiful fit with
the Readings the Church gives us to contemplate from **Isaiah, Hebrews and Mark**
and help us to better understand something that we must never take for granted.

It's the story of a **certain Theology Professor**, named **Dr. Smith**,
who taught at a small college out west.

His **goal** was to communicate the **essence of the Gospel** to **30 Freshmen students** he
had in his introductory Christianity class ... in spite of their apparent disinterest.

One day Dr. Smith stopped his top student named **Steve** after class and asked him
how many push-ups he could do. **Since Steve** was the **starting center** for the
football team, he was in **excellent physical condition** and he responded that he **did**
about 200 push-ups every night.

Dr. Smith **said**, *"That's pretty good, Steve, do you think you could do 300?"*

Steve **replied**, *"I don't know... I've never done 300 at a time."*

Dr. Smith **asked**, *"Could you possibly do 300 push-ups in 30 sets of 10?"*

Steve **said**, *"Well, I can try."*

Dr. Smith **then filled Steve in** on a certain **class project** that he had in mind.

When Friday came, Dr. Smith began his class by pulling out a large box of **extra fancy donuts**. All the **students were excited** at the prospect of having a class party.

Dr. Smith went up to the **first girl** in the **first row** and **asked**,

"Cynthia, do you want to have one of these donuts?"

Cynthia said, *"Yes."*

Dr. Smith then turned to Steve and asked,

"Steve, would you do ten push-ups so that Cynthia can have a donut?"

Steve said, *"Sure,"* and did a **quick ten**.

Dr. Smith **gave Cynthia** a donut.

Dr. Smith went on to the **next student** and asked, *"Joe, do you want a donut?"*

Joe said, *"Yes."*

Dr. Smith asked, *"Steve would you do ten push-ups so Joe can have a donut?"*

Steve **did ten push-ups** and Joe **got a donut**.

And **so it went**, down the first row,

Steve did **ten pushups** for every student **before** they got their donut.

But **halfway up** the **second row**, Dr. Smith came to Scott, a **basketball player** who was also in **great physical condition**. When he **asked**, *"Scott, do you want a donut?"* **Scott's reply was**, *"Well, can I do my own pushups?"*

Dr. Smith said, *"No ... Steve has to do them."*

So **Scott** replied, *"Well, then I don't want one."*

Dr. Smith shrugged and turned to Steve and asked, *"Steve, would you do ten pushups so Scott can have a donut he doesn't want?"*

With **perfect obedience** Steve **started** to do ten pushups.

But Scott shouted, *"HEY! I said I didn't want one!"*

Dr. Smith said, *"Look, this is my classroom and these are my donuts.*

Just leave it on the desk if you don't want it."

And he **put a donut** on **Scott's** desk.

By this time, Steve **had begun** to slow down a little and he was **starting to perspire**.

As **Dr. Smith** continued down the third row the students were beginning to get a little tense.

Dr. Smith asked, "*Jenny, do you want a donut?*"

Jenny sternly replied, "*No!*"

But Dr. Smith asked Steve, "*Steve, would you do ten more pushups so **Jenny** can have a donut that she doesn't want?*"

Steve **did ten more** and **Jenny got a donut** on her desk.

By now there was a **growing sense of uneasiness** in the room. The students were **continuing to say "No"**, **but Steve continued to labor** doing push-ups **for each one, growing wearier** with each additional set.

And there were **all these uneaten donuts** on the desks.

Just then a **recent transfer student** named **Jason, came to the door** and was **about to come in** when all the students yelled in one voice, "*NO! Stay out! Don't come in!*"

Jason didn't know what was going on.

Steve picked up his head and said, "*No, let him come in.*"

Dr. Smith said, "*You realize that if Jason comes in you'll have to do ten pushups for him?*"

Steve said, "*Yeah, let him come in, so he can have a donut too.*"

Dr. Smith asked, "*Jason, do you want a donut?*"

Being new to the room and **hardly knowing** what was going on, he **said**, "*Sure, give me a donut.*"

Dr. Smith asked, "*Steve, will you do ten pushups so that **Jason** can have a donut?*"

Steve did ten pushups **very slowly** and **with great effort**.

Jason, bewildered, was handed a donut and sat down.

As **Dr. Smith** finished the **fourth row**, **Steve's arms** were **now shaking** with each pushup as he **struggled to lift himself** off the floor. **Sweat** was pouring off his face and you **could hear** his heavy breathing.

Dr. Smith approached the last student and **asked**, "*Susan, do you want a donut?*"

With tears flowing down her face, **Susan** asked, "*Dr. Smith, why can't I help him?*"

Dr. Smith said, "*No, Steve has to do it alone, I have given him this task and he is in charge of seeing that everyone has the opportunity for a donut, whether they want it or not.*"

He went on, "*You see, when I decided to have this party, I looked at my grade book and Steve was the only student with a perfect grade. All the rest of you had either failed a test or skipped a class.*

*Steve told me that in football practice, when a player messes up he must do push-ups. I told Steve that none of **you** could come to my party unless **he** paid the price by doing **your** push-ups. He and I made a deal for your sakes."*

Dr. Smith asked, "*Steve, would you do ten pushups so Susan can have a donut?*"

As **Steve** very slowly finished the last of **310 pushups**, **with the understanding** that he **had accomplished** all that was required of him, his arms **buckled** beneath him and **he laid** on the floor.

Dr. Smith turned to the students and **said**. "*And so it was, that the Son of Man came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. And just like some us in this room, many leave the gift on the desk, unappreciated.*"

Two students helped Steve up off the floor. He was **physically exhausted**, but he wore a thin smile. **Dr. Smith said to him**, "*Well done, my good and faithful servant!*"

Turning to his class **Dr. Smith** said,

"My wish is that you might understand and fully comprehend all the riches of grace and mercy that have been won for you through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He paid the price for you, whether you accept it or not!"

Who would have thought that **this would be the way** that **God** would redeem us? **Who would have thought** that **God** would ask **His Only Son** to suffer and die ... to pay the price for **our sins** ... so that we could receive the gift of **Heaven**.

The fact is **no one knew** that this would be **God's plan for redemption** ...
even though God gave the world a hint of what He would do
some **500 years** before He sent **His Son** into our world.

In our **First Reading** today, the **Prophet Isaiah** foretells that the **coming Savior** would be a **suffering servant!** **He** says,
"*Through his suffering, **my servant** shall justify many, and **their** guilt **he** shall bear.*"

**Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God came into this world to justify us all ...
including Jason ... the last guy to enter the classroom!**

Jesus came that none should be lost and all might be saved.

As Isaiah said today, “The will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.”

Jesus paid the price of our redemption ... whether we choose to accept it or not.

**It's done! By God's design,
our Redemption is accomplished, once for all, by Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.**

**The question is ... are we going to accept the gift ...
or are we going to leave ... the Donut on the Desk?**

**The Donut, our gift of Redemption ... was secured at a price ...
the price of **service** and **suffering**.**

In our **Second Reading from Hebrews**, we heard,
“*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way.”*

**When it comes to service and to suffering, Jesus can say to every one of us,
“*Been there, done that!*” His whole life was one of service and suffering.
All 4 Gospels describe Jesus to be **the Suffering Servant**.**

**And just as Dr. Smith chose Steve, the only perfect student ...
to suffer and serve to bring **the gift** of a donut to **every student** in the room,
God the Father chose Jesus, the only perfect man ...
to suffer and serve to bring **the gift** of salvation to **every person** in the world.**

**And just as Steve suffered and spent himself on the floor ...
whether the students appreciated and accepted **their gift** or not,
Jesus suffered and spent Himself on the Cross ...
whether we appreciate and accept the **gift of our redemption** or not.**

**How exactly do we accept the Gift of Redemption?
Two things:**

In **Hebrews** we hear, “*So let us confidently approach the throne of grace
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.*”

Here **God** is calling us to come to Him though His Son to receive grace and mercy!

That **means** coming to Mass and going to Confession ...

That's where we receive the grace ... the supernatural help of God ...
and **the mercy ... the lavish forgiveness of God.**

That's **the first step** to accepting the gift.

The **second step** **Jesus** reveals in our **Gospel** today saying:

*“Whoever wishes to be great among you, will be your servant;
whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.”*

To receive the Gift of Heaven, which Jesus has already won for us ...
we must approach Him to receive His mercy and help in this life,
and
we must model our lives on Him, who spent himself in service to others.

As Jesus says today: *“The Son of Man did not come to be served
but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*

Imagine that ... The Creator ... serving and saving ... His creatures.

Let's contemplate the huge gift that's been won for us.

Through Our Lord's **suffering and death, salvation** has been won for us!

Now **all** of us have the **chance** to spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

It' not something we need to acquire.

It's **already** been purchased at a huge price.

All we have to do is accept the gift.

Like **Joyce**, you'll probably never look at another donut the same way ...

without wanting to thank God for the Great Gift ... of Redemption.

It's been won ... and it's offered to you!

Don't leave your donut on the desk!

Hold on to the gift of your redemption for dear life.

Hold on to the gift of your redemption for Eternal Life.