

“Whoever has ears, ought to hear.”

(In other words: “Listen-up!”)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a man, named Bill, was walking down the street. He had a lot on his mind. You see, he had been a very successful contractor, **BUT** (& there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life), due to the stresses of the housing market, he had turned to “the bottle” ...and ruined everything. First, he lost his business, then, he lost his home ... along with his wife and kids.

Today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. Mt., is all about listening to God’s Word (His teaching), taking it to heart, and putting it into practice. Now, there are 3 steps involved in responding to God’s word: receiving it, treasuring it, and practicing it.

1st step is **receiving**, i.e. **hearing** God’s word. We might even call it the **‘mind’** step. It involves listening to the Scripture being read and explained.

2nd step is **treasuring** God’s word. We might call it the **‘heart’** step, for it involves taking to heart the word we’ve just heard and considering the implications as to how it might better our life-style. It doesn’t, necessarily, all take place in church. It may start in church, **BUT** it usually continues during the hours/days/week(s) that follow.

3rd step is putting God’s word into **practice**. I call this the **‘soul’** step, for it involves in acting on what the **mind** has received and what the **heart** has treasured.

So, there are three steps involved in hearing God’s word:

The **mind** step (receiving it); the **heart** step (treasuring it); the **soul** step (practicing it).

I now ask you to recall ‘Bill,’ the contractor, who had lost everything, who was walking down the street with so much on his mind. Well, it so happened that as he walked along, he looked down and saw, not a penny, but an old, rusty nail. He thought to himself:

“That nail is a perfect picture of me. I’m feeling rusty and all bent out of shape, too. I’m good for nothing, but to be thrown away, just as that nail has been.”

Bill stooped down, picked up the nail, and put it in his pocket. When he got home (a loft over a friend’s garage), he took a hammer and began to pound the nail perfectly straight again. Next, he got an emery cloth, a kind of sandpaper for metal, and, completely, removed all the rust from it. When Bill placed that old nail next to a new one—there was no difference between the two.

With that realization, a thought flashed through Bill’s mind: his own life could be straightened out and sanded clean again, just as that nail was.

BUT... ‘could he take the hard blows & all the sanding?’... you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

He decided to try.

And I am here to tell you, today, Bill is back in business and reunited with his family. Bill keeps that ‘restored-old-nail’ in his wallet... just as a reminder of how far we can get ‘off track’ if we let ourselves get too busy to take God’s word (that is, His teaching) to heart.

Today’s Gospel is an invitation to all of us, self included, to respond to God’s word as did Bill:

By **receiving** it, **treasuring** it, and **practicing** it.

I close with this brief prayer:

**Lord Jesus, sower of the seed of God’s word,
help us to respond to your word,
not only with our whole mind and our whole heart,
but also, with our whole soul!**

May our ever-loving Abba-God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
(See below: bulletin article)

From the Vicar's Desk



A few years ago, a judge in a 'Custody Hearing' requested that I write a brief letter to the Court, explaining the Catholic Church's position on infant baptism. I believe it worthwhile to share this letter and other related practices.

To Whom It May Concern:

The necessity of baptism is essential to salvation. It is imperative that a person be baptized as soon as is practicable. In the case of an infant, baptism is expected to be administered before the baby is taken anywhere (out of the house). Commonly, a baby should be baptized within the first month of life. Infant baptism is a grave responsibility of ALL parents. This is an inherent obligation of parenthood in the Catholic Church. To fail to do so in a timely fashion, without good reason, is considered a gross irresponsibility.

What happens with reference to a baby's baptism if the parents are unwed? Some priests are reluctant to baptize a baby of unwed parents. In conscience, these priests are concerned that the child may not be raised in the faith. This is a legitimate concern and a defensible position. I, on the other hand, do not hold this position. In such cases, I believe this to be a 'teachable moment.' The (unwed) couple is reaching out to the Church for their baby's baptism. As their priest, I want to 'be there' for them at this crucial time in their (usually) young lives. So, I trust that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibility to their child, even though their personal lives may be 'out of order.' (Often, the baby's grandparents give encouragement and essential support.) Though such times can be confusing and fraught with turmoil, this is no reason to 'penalize' an innocent baby for what may be construed as irresponsible conduct by the young parents. Perhaps young & irresponsible, they are to be admired for their outstanding courage in not taking the 'easy way out'...abortion!

The only requirement I expect, besides a sincere promise that the child be reared Catholic, is that the godparents be 'Practicing Catholics' and able to prove this with a Sponsor's Certificate from their (home) pastor.

It is always an honor for me to help in such situations. So, please, do not hesitate to call.

*God bless the children!
Sincerely, Fr. 'T.'*