Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time: 6/18/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 11:30 AM

I have here a broken Paschal Candle, the same one you saw burning here during the Easter Season. You might ask, What happened? Well, let me tell you. I had a funeral this past Tuesday in our Weekday Mass Chapel. Of course, I wheeled that candle into the chapel because it reminds us of Baptism, our antidote to physical death. Well, I had to light that candle. It’s pretty heavy, and I had to take it out of its stand to light it. I put it on the carpet there, and it was stably standing on that carpet. I struck the match to light it when, all of a sudden, I saw this candle take a nosedive resulting in this bifurcated candle. So why am I telling you all of this? Well, I’ll get to that in a moment.

I came across three powerful quotes this past week. Last Tuesday was the feast of St. Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of lost things, you know, “Tony, Tony, come around. Something’s lost and must be found.” Anthony was really the patron saint of lost souls. He is quoted as saying, **The man who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in different languages. These different languages are different ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, patience and obedience; we speak in those languages when we reveal in ourselves these virtues to others. Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak. We are full of words but empty of actions.**Powerful words! I also came across an article I wrote for my previous parish’s newsletter twenty years ago, an article you will find in my bulletin column next Sunday. In that article, I quote the German atheist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the godfather of the Nazi movement in Germany, who was once quoted as saying, that, for him ***to believe in the Christian Redeemer, Christians would have to act as a people who are redeemed.*** Then on this past Friday’s Feast of the Sacred Heart, we heard St. John tell us in his first epistle, ***Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.*** All three are very powerful quotes, and all three challenge us mightily to live our faith in strong and powerful ways which brings me back to this broken Paschal Candle.

As I said earlier, I took this candle out of its stand, and it was stably standing on that carpet in our weekday chapel. I don’t know if you have heard of the butterfly effect, but it postulates that something as small and insignificant as a butterfly flapping its wings in one part of the Earth results in a storm on the other side of our planet. The truth being emphasized in it is that little things can have great, even stupendous, effects. I think it was so with this candle. It was stably sitting on that carpet, and I don’t know if my sleeve brushed it or if the movement of the wind in my striking of that match cause what was very balanced to fall and break in two. In trying to live those big challenging quotes from St. Anthony of Padua, or from Friedrich Nietzsche, or from St. John in his first epistle, please don’t overlook the importance of what we might judge as being too small to be worth anything when in actuality is earth-shaping and earth-shaking.

For example, I mentioned earlier that I came across that Nietzsche quote in an article I wrote for that parish’s newsletter. One of the things I remember about that parish is one Sunday I was standing outside one of that church’s doors, a door that I normally didn’t stand outside of, when I greeted a man I didn’t know. He was a Presbyterian who earlier that week had had an experience of God so he came to Mass that Sunday and was greeted by me. My welcome eventually led him to joining the Catholic Church, and he told me that, if I hadn’t stopped him and greeted him, he never would have come back. Another example of something seemingly worthless yet is earth-shaping and earth-shaking. Some of you veteran parishioners might remember Mike and Liz Clemensen. Mike died some years ago, but she came back here for a funeral. When I saw her, I shared with her a comment made by her daughter Janelle before Janell’s wedding to her husband, Arthur, back in 2007. Janelle, Art, and I were discussing how to sustain their marriage on a daily basis. Janell shared that one of the things her parents did each day without fail was to stand in front of each other each day, hold each other’s hands, look into each other’s eyes, and say “I do,” an insight that I have shared with every couple whose wedding I have had since 2007. Yet another example of something seemingly worthless yet is earth-shaping and earth-shaking. Or think of how simply you met your best friend. Also do any of us really know how a kind word, a simple “thank-you” or a joyful “good morning” might turn another person’s day around? Seemingly worthless things or gestures can, in actuality, be earth-shaping and earth-shaking.

May this broken Paschal Candle be a good reminder of the power of the spiritual butterfly effect.