HOMILY — 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, A
by Bob Schramm, OSFS

At our community meeting in Allentown, Pa., this past week, I was privileged to lead a brief time of prayer we called “An Examen.”

The Oblate community is geographically divided into two provinces. There is talk of the two being merged. The province I belong to was formed in 1966. There has always been a bit of underlying tension between the two. Someone put it in terms of “My dad is better than your dad.”

In recent years we have worked more and come in collaboration with one another.

This “Examen Liturgy” was meant to help in healing some past hurts. It was an invitation for all of us to look at the past and hopefully let go of some of the hurts while also rejoicing in the many gifts we have in common.

At the beginning of that time of prayer, I said: “The Gospels begin with a call to conversion. Conversion, or metanoia in the Greek, is to change one’s heart, one’s direction. A converted heart sees the world as Christ sees it, with a “big mind” (meta-noia), not a small, fearful mind (para-noia).”

Three times in today’s Gospel, Jesus urges his disciples (us) not to live in fear.

Henri Nouwen, (d. 1996) says there are two fundamental postures with which we can go through life.

1. We can through life either in a posture of paranoia or one of metanoia.
   • Paranoia has us feeling that we forever need to protect ourselves from unfairness,
   • that others will hurt us if we show any vulnerability,
• that we need to assert our strength and talents to impress others.
• Paranoia quickly turns warmth into cold, understanding into suspicion and generosity into self-protection.

2. The posture of *metanoia*, on the other hand, is seen in Jesus on the cross. There, on the cross, we see him exposed and vulnerable, his arms spread in a gesture of embrace, and his hands open, with nails through them. Metanoia, the meta mind, the bigger heart, doesn't close in fear. The meta-heart can hear the words of Jeremiah ringing within: “The Lord is with me like a mighty champion.” The Meta heart trusts those words of St. Paul: “The grace of God and the gracious gift of Jesus Christ overflow for the many.”

Ron Rolheiser, OMI, says that some of early Church leaders suggested that all of us have two minds and two hearts. For them, each of us has a big mind and a big heart. That's the saint in us, the image and likeness of God inside us, the warm, compassionate part of us. All of us harbor a true greatness within.

But each of us also has within us a petty mind and a petty heart. That's the narcissistic part of us, the wounded part, the paranoid part that turns self-protective and immediately begins to close the doors of warmth and trust whenever we appear threatened.

We are complex beings. We are both big-hearted and petty, open-minded and bigoted, trusting and suspicious, saint and narcissist, generous and hording, warm and cold.

Everything depends upon which heart and which mind we are linked to and operating out of at any given moment. One minute we are willing to die for others; a minute later we'd just as soon see them dead. One minute we want to give ourselves over in love;
a minute later we want to use our gifts to show our superiority over others. Metanoia and paranoia vie for our hearts.

Jesus, in his message and his person, invites us to metanoia, to move toward and stay within our big minds and big hearts, so that in the face a stinging remark, a surprise illness, the loss of a job, the death of a loved one our inner doors of warmth and trust do not close.

Jesus invites us to these tables of Word and Eucharist to draw us into continual METANOIA