

Homily – 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, B, 2018  
by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS

I suspect that before this past Friday  
most of us here had probably never heard of Sen. Jeff Flake.  
If that name isn't familiar to you now  
I'm thinking you haven't been paying much attention to the news  
these past few days.  
Sen. Jeff Flake is now the senior senator from Arizona  
following death of Senator John McCain. He is a Republican.

I want to suggest that somehow Jeff Flake embodies a good deal  
of the spirit of all three readings today

I suspect that for many of us, myself included,  
the majority of his political positions are quite opposite to our own.  
So Jeff Flake ends up – for many of us anyway –  
much like Eldad and Medad in our first reading.  
They don't belong to “our inner circle.”

Or, like the person driving out demons in the Gospel  
who John wants to stop  
“because he doesn't follow us.”

Here are a few examples of Jeff Flake political positions:

He is given an  
83 percent rating by gun owners of America;  
BUT  
0 percent rating by defenders of Wildlife Action Fund;  
24 percent rating by the ACLU;  
4 percent rating by Alliance for Retired Americans;  
5 percent rating by Clean Water Action Coalition.

Sometimes the outsides, like Jeff Flake, have an important piece of the truth.

Today's second reading began with some pretty harsh words:

“Come now, you rich people,  
weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.  
Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.  
Your gold and silver have rusted,  
and their rust will be evidence against you,  
and it will eat your flesh like fire.”

I heard echoes of the letter of James in the voices of  
Anna Maria Archila and Maria Gallagher,  
two brave women who confronted Jeff Flake at an elevator last Friday morning.  
It think it was the grace of God that prompted him  
not to close that elevator door on them.  
He didn't close the door. He listened, awkwardly, and changed his mind.  
Talk about the grace of God.

Finally, there are those harsh words from Jesus at the end of today's Gospel:  
“If your hand or foot cause you to sin, cut it off.  
“If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.”

Jeff Flake put his political career on the line the other day.  
for the sake of the common good.  
What a remarkable gesture – and he's a Mormon.

We're all called upon, at times in our life, to let go of something we cherish,  
for the sake of the greater good.

For one person it may be alcohol.  
For another it may be video games or TV.  
We are regularly in the position of having to make hard choices  
because in this life it's true, you can't have it all.

I think Sen. Flake can serve as a reminder to us all  
to keep our eyes fixed on the greater good.

Now the Scriptures provide assurance for us and even guidance  
when it comes to seeking the greater good.

What they do not offer is explicit instruction  
about choices to be made.

For that we must rely on the whisperings of the Spirit  
to breathe into us the deep breath of life and truth.

I think Friday morning, for those of us who saw it,  
we were privileged to see the Spirit move a few people,  
and really, just perhaps, a whole nation,  
to a deeper sense of respect and listening to one another.

Rainer Maria Rilke, an Austrian poet who died in 1926,  
wrote in his Letters to a Young Poet:

“I want to ask you, as clearly as I can,  
to bear with patience  
all that is unresolved in your heart,  
and try to love the questions themselves. ...

For everything must be lived.

Live the questions now,  
perhaps then, someday, you will gradually, without noticing,  
live into the answer.”