

- Today's readings remind me of the ***Olympics*** going on in *Rio de Janeiro*.
- In our ***1st Reading*** we hear God speaking through the *Prophet Isaiah* and promising that He would gather "the nations of every language..." in Jerusalem. (Is 66:18-21)
 - This happened when people from around the world came to see Jesus.
- In our ***2nd Reading*** from the Letter to the Hebrews we heard,
 - "all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for *pain*, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it..." (Heb 12:5-7)
- That sounds like what an ***Olympic Athlete*** goes through as they train all their lives for this moment to prove to the world they are the "best of the best!"
- **In our Gospel message**, Jesus reminds us that at the end of our lives, people from all nations will be gathered before Him to see who was the "best of the best."
 - It doesn't matter where you grew up in the world, what language you speak, what ethnicity you are, what gender you are...

- we will **ALL** one day stand before the *Judgment Seat of Christ* and have our lives scrutinized by him to see if we developed the same *integrity, character, love, forgiveness* and *compassion*—as *HIM!*
- Those who did not strive to become as *Holy* and *Perfect* as him will hear Jesus say to us, "*Depart from me, you evil doers!*"
[pause]
- **God...** is the "Landlord of Heaven." **Heee** gets to decide which type of "tenant" lives in His House for all eternity.
- The criteria for becoming a "Citizen of Heaven" can be broken down into these two truths:
 - **ONE:** Did we believe Jesus truly was the *Son of God* who was *crucified, died* and *buried* and then *rose* on the third day to prove he was truly Divine and the Savior of the World;
- and **TWO:**
 - **Knowing** that Jesus *proved* he was Divine, did we take everything he said to us **seriously** and strive to be *morally perfect*—just as Jesus is *morally perfect*?....

- Some of you may be saying, "Fr. Mark, you can't be serious. How could anyone be *morally perfect*?"
 - "With man this is *impossible*, but with God all things are *possible*..." (Mt 19:26, Mk 10:27)
- God gave us *His Commandments* and *Wisdom* to live by so we could be guided into becoming as *Virtuous* as His Son, Jesus.
- That's why Jesus gave us His **Holy Word** to *rewire* our way of *thinking* from mankind's way of *thinking*.
- That's why Jesus gave us the **Holy Eucharist** to reassure us his *Supernatural Life* would live in us if we welcomed him into our Soul as the "Bread of Life!"
- That's why Jesus died on the cross as the "Sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world,"
 - and then gave us the ***Sacrament of Reconciliation*** so we could be cleansed again after our Baptism.
- We can't become *perfectly holy* in ***every way***, UNLESS we invite the *Life of Christ* to live in us in ***every way***...

- I want you to think about this... Being *morally perfect* is not some impossible task. In fact, we all expect moral perfection from others.
- **If I told you** I was only going to lie to you **10%** of the time, would you trust me? *No!*
- If I told you I was only going to cheat you **5%** of the time, would you trust me? *No!*
- If I told you I was only going to steal from you **1%** of the time, would trust me? *No!*
- If I told you I was only going to be *kind* and *loving* to you **90%** of the time, would you allow yourself to feel *close* and *loving* to me **100%** of the time? *No!.....*
- **Unless** we treat each other with *honesty, fairness, integrity* and *love* **100%** of the time—
 - there will be some disharmony or tension in our relationship and it will hardly be "perfect."
- Since there is **NO** *disharmony* or *tension* in Heaven, those who choose to create *disharmony* and *tension* from their lack of morality will EXCLUDE themselves from joining that community.

- **The Truth is**, we expect *everyone* to be *perfectly moral* with *us*—why do we give ourselves excuses NOT to be *perfectly moral* with them?
 - Because there are *Evil Forces* always at work around us (and sometimes within us!) seeking to corrupt our morality.
- This is why we must always be vigilant against them. When we resist the Devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7).
- In today's Gospel, Jesus is saying, "There are NO excuses. I demand *spiritual perfection* from you just like you demand *spiritual perfection* from others!"
- It is not for *his* benefit we become holy, but for *ours* so we can spend eternity with Him and all those who strove to be as *morally perfect* as him.
- In Heaven, they're called "Saints." And for those who have not attained *Sainthood* in this life,
 - Jesus will complete the process in *Purgatory* if he sees we were earnestly trying to be *morally perfect* in this life.
- Our world is full of a multitude of attractions that distract us from focusing on how serious Jesus is about our *Purpose* in life.

- And that Purpose, is to prepare our soul for the next life—the *ETERNAL LIFE*—a life where everything we wished this life was—will be.
 - But it can only **BE** that way if we have surrendered to living our lives based on everything Jesus told us to do.
- The world doesn't want us to *surrender* to Christ's authority. It wants us to surrender to our OWN authority.
- The world offers a *wide path* of *entertainment, pleasures* and *excitement*—and a lot of it is GOOD,
 - but it's only supposed to be a "*part*" of our life—*not* the **PURPOSE** of our life.
- The Purpose of our Life is to KNOW, LOVE and SERVE God so we can be formed into what is most important to God—to become a person just like His Son, Jesus Christ.
- As Christians, we are called by Christ to walk the ***Road Less Traveled*** by society.
 - A ***Road*** that involves *sacrifices, self-examination* and *brutal honesty* with who we are, who we think we are; and who we are not.

- A **Road** that requires turning away from unholy thoughts and actions rather than **expanding** them.
 - A **Road** that requires us to give of our *Time, Treasure* and *Talents* to others—when we would rather give them to ourselves.
- It's a **Road** that leads to the "Narrow Gate" as Jesus called it in today's Gospel. That's the "*entrance gate*" into Heaven,
 - and if we are carrying the "baggage" of *Pride, Materialism, Unforgiveness, Lust, and Self-Centeredness* with us, we ain't getting through that pearly gate!
- We see in our *2nd Reading* from the *Letter to the Hebrews* how God can be hard on us like a "loving parent" who is trying to "bring out the best" in their child:
 - "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines..." (Heb 12:5-7)
- In other words, if you think its hard to be Christ-like than "Good!" That shows you're on the right path, the rocky path, the narrow path

- as we "die" of our wicked and self-centered ways and open ourselves to receive the Fullness of Christ's Grace and Presence in our Heart, Mind and Soul!
- Anyone who has truly tried to apply Jesus teachings to every aspect of their lives know they will run into conflict—*either in themselves*—or in the world.
- When we make Christ the ***desire*** of our life each and every day, we will feel our Soul being *Transformed* into the *image* and *likeness* of Christ more and more.
- **At one time or another**, we have all walked around in life feeling like there was a "void" in our Soul,
 - an *emptiness* that we tried to *fill* with the never ending pleasures of this world.
- We tried to fill this void by ***meeting*** more people; ***going*** more places; ***buying*** more things fill our lives with one more form of *entertainment* after *another*—
 - *but in the end*, we felt just as empty as before as the the "joy" and "excitement" quickly wore off.
- None of these things can ever satisfy what our Soul yearns for in life, which is to be in close fellowship with our Creator.

- **WHY?** Because that which is eternal—*our SOUL*—can never be satisfied by that which is *temporary*—the *people, places* and *things* of this world...
- Only living in Christ and for Christ can lead us to the perpetual *Joy, Happiness, Security* and *Love* we all seek deep in our Soul...
- When we finally surrender ourselves to living according to Christ's authority—rather than our own—
 - we will discover the *Spiritual Connection* Jesus makes with us by loving him with *all our heart, all our soul, all our mind* and *all our strength* (Mk 12:30).
- It will feel like we have been caught in the "**tractor beam**" of eternal life.
 - A **beam** that will pull us closer and closer to what is *Real*, and *True*, and *Eternal!*
- This *Spiritual Connection* comes from the *indwelling* of the *Holy Spirit* the more we live in "right-relationship" with Christ.
- The *Joy* and *Inner-peace* we will experience from the Holy Spirit living and growing in us will become so "*intoxicating*"

- we will eventually discover we cannot live without being in the presence of our Lord, or *feeling* his presence within us.
- This may sound like the romantic-type of love two people have between them (*eros*). It is not.
- It is a *Supernatural Love* that is only experienced when we invite the *Spirit of Christ* to permeate every aspect of our being.
- You'll know when you have the *Supernatural Love* of Christ at work in you when you'll want to shout from every rooftop and street corner— "*JESUS CHRIST is LORD!*"
- This is when Jesus has truly become the *Light of our Life*, the *Object of our Affection*, and the *Centerpiece of our Salvation!*
- **I began this homily** by talking about the *Olympics* and how all nations will be gathered before Christ.
- He will judge what "*competed*" for our attention in life and what led us away from him.
- This reminded me of what Saint Paul said to the Corinthians in his first letter to them.

- "Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one..." (1 Cor 9:24-25)
- The "imperishable crown" that St. Paul is referring to is our *eternal salvation!*
- Just as an Olympic athlete makes many sacrifices in order to "win the Gold,"
 - we should work just as *fervently* to ensure our *eternal salvation* by doing what our Lord has commanded us to do.
- This way, instead of worrying about hearing our Lord say to us, "depart from me you evil doer..."
 - we will instead hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant..."