

32nd Sunday B cycle homily 11-11-18

Today we have the second homily on Unleash the Gospel. What is Unleash the Gospel. Many already know from the videos you saw last week that it is a new direction in our Archdiocese to let the Spirit of God take hold of our personal lives, our households and our parish. We are moving from maintenance to mission, witnessing to the good News of the Risen Lord through our words and deeds.

Today we are focusing on how do I renew the life of the Spirit in my personal life and in our households. I would like to begin with a story

The story of Msgr. Joseph J. Stephens PA

Back in 1982 the retreat director, a Franciscan priest, was sent to Brooklyn New York to study for his doctorate in spirituality. He lived at a rectory in Brooklyn on the corner of 4th and Owen where stood the beautiful church of St. Matthew whose pastor was Msgr. Joseph J. Stephens, PA .

When the young priest entered, he was conducted to his room and was getting unpacked when his phone rang. It was the secretary telling him that, , the pastor of St. Matthews Church which stood at

the corner of Fourth and Owen in Brooklyn NY, Msgr. Joseph J. Stephens PA wanted to see him immediately. He hurried down and entered the office of Msgr. Joseph P. Stephens PA , pastor of St. Matthew's Church on the corner of 4th and Owen in Brooklyn. There behind his large mahogany desk in his collar, suit and cuffs sat Msgr Joseph P. Stephens, PA. You may be wondering what PA stands for. It stands for Protonotary Apostolic. It is the highest ranking title for Msgrs. in the Catholic Church. He has to privilege of wearing the miter (the hat bishops wear) on Christmas eve mass, which he did proudly.

He said, "Sit down young man." Msgr. Joseph J. Stephens, PA , pastor of St. Matthew's Church that stood on the corner of 4th and Own in Brooklyn looked at him and said, " When you come to the dinner table, you are NOT to come dressed in your sport shirt and jeans as you are now dressed. You are to come in suit and collar.

Well he indeed came to dinner dressed formally. At the table were the two assistant pastors dressed formally and Msgr. Joseph P. Stephens PA , pastor of St. Matthew's Church on the corner of 4th and Owen in Brooklyn dressed impeccably in suit, cuffs and collar.

At dinner he mentioned that one of the women in the parish had called and said her son was deathly ill in the hospital and would one of the priests visit him. Back in 1982 AIDS patients were dying awful deaths; nobody knew the cause of their deaths or how it spread.

Msgr. asked the first assistant if he would visit him but he had a full schedule that evening. He asked the second assistant, but he mentioned the danger of contagion from this disease. Then Msgr. Joseph J. Stephens PA , pastor of St. Matthew's Church on the corner of 4th and Owen in Brooklyn turned to the visiting priest and asked him to go. He paused in silence for a long moment. Finally Msgr. agreed to go with the visiting priest.

They got into Msgr's long black Cadillac and drove to the hospital and the young man was in an isolation unit. The men had to get dressed in Hasmit suits with space ship like helmets and gloves. The staff unzipped the enclosed room where the patient lay. They entered and saw the young man lying on the bed. He was very thin with sores all over his body. They approached the young man of 22.

Msgr. Asked him, "How are you doing son?" the young man with a frightened look on his face said, " Not well, Father ."

“ What most bothers you about being so sick?”

“ I have not been touched by another human being for over a month (no touch, no pat on the back, no embrace or hug) And then to the priest’s amazement, Msgr. took off his helmet, unzipped his hasmit suit, removed his gloves, and took the young man into his arms. After praying with him they left. They drove back to the rectory in silence.

As they were walking into the rectory the younger priest turned to Msgr. and asked, “Why did you do that?” He said, “Look, I am an old man. These hands of mine are responsible for much sinning. It is the least I could to do extend God’s mercy and love to a dying man.

(Pause)

My brothers and sisters,

Fathers and mothers,

Are we all not saved sinners like Msgr. ...and like the twp women in today’s readings?

Are we not all called to Unleash the Good News of God’s love and mercy?

Today’s readings tells us of two widows, two women mature in the faith, realizing all God has done for them, who are willing to give all they have to extend God’s mercy and love.

**Well, I am here to invite you to take two steps this week to help
Unleash the Gospel in your lives.**

**First, if you have not already done so, please see the videos
introducing Unleash the Gospel Movement. Take a card at the end of
your pew so that you can see the video on your I-phone. If you do not
have an I-phone or computer, you can get a written copy of the videos
in the back of church after mass today.**

**And second, make daily prayer part of your personal life and your
family life. Do not be afraid to express your faith in word and deed to
your family.**

**In all our limitations and shortcomings, let us join Msgr. Joseph J.
Stephens PA, and become part of the band of Jesus' joyful missionary
disciples by extending God's mercy and love.**