

I have a priest friend and mentor from Milwaukee who is almost 92 years old. He talks about how he's always known that he would be a priest. Now, as a young child, he had other thoughts, but always revolving around being a priest – he would be a cowboy priest, or a fireman priest, or a policeman priest – regardless of where his imagination took him, he would still be a priest. And at nearly 92 years of age, he is the oldest priest in the Diocese of Milwaukee, and is still very active.

This is what Jesus is speaking of when he speaks of “new wine” and “old wineskins.” When we hear God's Word, it seems that we cannot help but influence it by who we are and how we think.

In a sense, we want to force fit God's plans into our own plans. What God has in store for each one of us is beyond what we could ever imagine. And when we try to limit God, it's a bit like trying to sop up the ocean with a Kleenex.

And so, Jesus tells his disciples, and us as well, to not put God's “new wine” into our old “wineskins.” Otherwise the wine will be lost, and the wineskins will be ruined. That is, if we try to squeeze God's infinite grace into an old plan of life, not only will the plan be ruined, but we will lose the grace itself.

Rather, as Saint Paul tells us, we are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” That is, the mysteries are not our own to do with as we please; but rather God's Word, the Sacraments, His grace, and His mercy are entrusted to all of us to do with as He calls us. And if someone decide to adjust God's Word to fit their own way of thinking, then they have become an un-trustworthy servant.

Now, how do we avoid these pitfalls?

The Psalm tells us to “delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires.” Notice it's not “your mind's desire.” Sometimes our heads get in the way of our hearts. We don't often get our “head's desire.” And a lot of time, we have to shut down our busy minds to really understand the intentions of our hearts.

A term for this is “purification of motives.” That is, often times we want the right things for the wrong reasons. Or, we want the wrong things for the right reasons. And our minds spin up complicated explanations for why things should be that way.

St. Augustine says “our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in You.” And this is a good summary of today's readings. We need to recognize that God is our first desire and final end. While we may know this in a limited way, it is important that we know this not only in our minds, and in our hearts, but we must realize it in the depths of our beings.

Let us pray that we may “be still before the Lord, and wait patiently before Him.” That is, let go and let God; allowing God's grace to take us where we are and lead us to where He would have us be.