

---

## *I Know What You Did Last Summer!*

**A sermon by the Reverend Ricardo Bailey**  
**Proper 17 - Year A**

How would you feel if someone you didn't know told you today, "*I know what you did last summer?*" For some of us, we would probably instantly go back to the 1997 teenage movie thriller about four friends who covered up a murder the previous summer and who are being chased by a psychopath killer all throughout the film.

So, I have created a trap for myself! How in the world can I relate a movie about a psychopath killer to the words of Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles? I'm not preaching on psychopath killers. Rather I want to preach on the importance of the title of the movie! Therefore, before I get into your business, let me share with you—*the party people*—what I did this summer.

This summer, I worked here at the Cathedral and at Westminster. I would also mention that I took my wife to New Orleans to the Essence Music Festival for her birthday. Maybe I would also mention that I had an enjoyable weekend with our Cathedral high school group on the whitewater rapids in Tennessee! You would ask, "*Well Father Bailey, did you get in the boat?*" I would respond in all charity—in the Name of Jesus, "**ARE YOU CRAZY?**" I went rafting 20 years ago on the Chattahochee River and the water moccasin that positioned itself around my wrist was more than enough evidence for me to develop *my personal hermeneutic*—that it was not in God's vision for me to do that again!

However, let's think about God's vision for us. How would we respond if God told us after Labor Day 2014, *that He knew what we did last summer?* It can be any season of the year, but as a people we all do a lot of things during the summer. Some of the things we do are extraordinary and some of the things we do can be described as being mundane. Some of us get a lot of rest and some of us work harder and study harder to achieve goals that we have set for ourselves. Maybe, some Commandments were broken and maybe some of us are now candidates for canonization! *I don't know what you did this past summer, but do you remember?*

Paul's Letter to the Romans that was proclaimed this morning gives us a prototype of Paul's own interpretation of the ethic of what it means to be an active disciple of Jesus! Every sentence and every phrase gives us a clear directive of what we should do in our lives.

The Apostle to the Gentiles writes:

*"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are."*

*"Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*

*"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ... if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

This "litany" of how we should act as followers of the Risen Jesus must be understood within the context of almost every

piece of literature that is credited to Paul. For Paul, an imitation of the person and the character of Jesus is essential to the identity of the Christian and the witness that the Christian lives out in the world!

Forgiveness, joy, compassion, charity, and peace are all hallmarks of the way that every Christian should be. However, sometimes we all fall into the trap of thinking that we are being “*too nice*,” and that people take our kindness of granted. While it is true that we should not allow ourselves to be abused or mistreated in any form by any one, there is a deeper message in this part of Paul’s Letter to the Church in Rome!

Every person on earth has heard of the name Francis of Assisi. Francis was a Catholic Deacon and the founder of the Franciscans – known throughout this planet by the grey, black, and the ever-so-popular brown robes that they wear. A Franciscan follows the life-example of discipleship of Francis of Assisi. Why? It’s very simple, Francis took the life and the words of Jesus seriously.

When Francis made Jesus his choice, there was not a doubt in his mind. The man was not a hypocrite and amazingly, he was able to see God in everything he came into contact! This is what made Francis such an awesome example of what it meant to be a Christian. For Francis, it was not complicated and I am sure that he would tell you that it is not easy either!

However, I believe what makes Francis so attractive and relevant to all people of good-will—Christian and yes, even non-Christians—is that Francis did not complicate what Jesus meant for him. Listen to this prayer:

*“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.”*

*St. Francis of Assisi*

Cathedral Family, I don’t know of the exact date Francis of Assisi found Jesus and converted his life to the Gospel. It could’ve been the summer, winter, spring, or fall; what matters is that he lived his life in the same manner and urgency that Saint Paul says to us this Sunday. Francis is credited as saying in his Rule 1221 to his brothers in Religious Life, “all the Friars ... should preach by their deeds.”

“Preach by your deeds,” “let your work speak for itself,” “show and prove...” There is a place and an importance relevance of words, but it’s what we do with the words that transform the face of this world! We all have heard that “talk is cheap,” or “[you’re] talking loud and sayin’ nuthin!” In other words, the words of Saint Paul that were inspired by the ethic of being an active follower of Jesus entailed intentional action on the part of every follower. How will people ever know that you and I are Christians by our love, when we do not authentically love one another?

The call today, on this “un-official” day before the last day of Summer is to renew ourselves as followers of Jesus on this, the first day of the week! Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can ask God to renew our hearts, our minds and even renew the ways that we see each other.

Perhaps the summer of 2014 was the time where we prayed and worked for justice in our minds and hearts and in the ways that we see our neighbor!

Maybe the summer of 2014 can be the summer where like Francis of Assisi we received a new lease on life and began to see

the world as God sees the world—not as an evil place but as an existence that was created for and has the potential to truly be what it was created for and that is for good!

Perhaps the summer of 2014 can be the season where we said a resounding AMEN to the will of God in our lives! This was the time and Saint Philip's Cathedral was the place where we decided like the many heroes and sheroes who made this ground holy by their presence and prayers that we, like them, have decided to make Jesus our choice! For it became clearer to me this summer that,

*"The road is rough,  
the going gets tough,  
and the hills are hard to climb!  
I started out a long time ago,  
there's no doubt in my mind,  
I've decided to make Jesus my choice!"*

*("I've Decided to Make Jesus My Choice" – Lead Me, Guide Me Hymnal – GIA Publishing)*

So, maybe when the day after Labor Day comes around, we can reflect on what happened these past three months and when we are asked in Jesus' name we can show and prove what it was that we did last summer!

May God bless you all!