

**Homily for Memorial Mass for United States Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia
Saint James Chapel at the Quigley Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Chicago**

**Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle C
September 11, 2016**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here for this Memorial Mass to remember and pray for the late Justice Antonin Scalia of the United States Supreme Court. As a civil lawyer myself, I have long enjoyed reading Justice Scalia's opinions. I have especially enjoyed reading his dissenting opinions, which he wrote with such incisive insight. I have most enjoyed reading the footnotes in his dissenting opinions, where he perhaps most clearly expressed his pointed comments with accuracy, humor and wit.

My purpose here in this homily at this Mass is not to review Justice Scalia's jurisprudence nor to deliver an elegiac reflection on his life. Those who are interested in hearing learned speakers give such talks will have that opportunity after Mass at the "Chicago Tribute to Justice Antonin Scalia" this afternoon at one o'clock at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Rather, I take my cue from the homily given by Justice Scalia's son,

Father Paul Scalia, at his father's funeral Mass. Father Scalia began his homily by saying, "We are gathered here because of one man. A man known personally to many of us, known only by reputation to even more, a man loved by many, scorned by others, a man known for great controversy, and for great compassion. That man, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth. It is He whom we proclaim. Jesus Christ, son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, buried, risen, seated at the right hand of the Father. It is because of Him, because of His life, death and resurrection that we do not mourn as those who have no hope, but in confidence we commend Antonin Scalia to the mercy of God."

It was my privilege to have met Justice Scalia on several occasions. I did not know him well enough to comment on the nature or depth of his relationship with Jesus Christ. In fact, no matter how well we know a person, no one can peer into another person's soul to view his relationship with God. Only the Good Lord Himself knows that. We can, however, observe a person's actions and behaviors which give external expression to an inner reality. From this, we can see that Antonin Scalia was a man who took his Catholic faith seriously, practiced it dutifully, and died in it peacefully. The importance of his faith can be seen most clearly in relation

to his family, especially his nine children, some of whom we are pleased to welcome among us here today. I can personally relate to that, as I am also from a family of nine children, and I know the love of such a family.

My favorite personal recollection of Justice Scalia was some years ago when I was chosen by my colleagues in the Chicago Chapter of the Advocates Society of Polish-American Lawyers to be the movant making the motion to admit the members of our Society to practice before the Bar of the United States Supreme Court. I arrived the day before and was staying at the rectory of my friend, Monsignor Peter Vaghi, then Pastor of Saint Patrick Church in downtown Washington, D.C., now Pastor of the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda, Maryland. I was chatting with Monsignor Vaghi and asked him if he thought it would be appropriate for me to wear my clerical suit and Roman collar when appearing before the Court to make the ceremonial motion. Monsignor Vaghi said, "Well, let me call my friend Justice Scalia and see what he says." So he picks up the phone, dials a number, and when a voice on the other end answers, he says, "Hello, Nino! Peter Vaghi here. I'm with a priest who is also a lawyer and he will be appearing before the Court tomorrow to move the admission of a group of lawyers to the Bar of the Supreme Court, and he's

wondering if it would be appropriate for him to dress as a priest in his clerical suit and Roman collar." I watch as he listens to the answer on the other end of the line, and then tells me, "Nino says he'll be offended if you don't wear your collar, but also says don't be surprised if the Chief, referring to then Chief Justice William Rehnquist, calls you 'Mister' instead of 'Father.' He says the Chief never uses titles, and even a five-star General appearing before him would be 'Mister,' so don't take it personally."

So the next day I am seated with my colleagues in the Court when the Justices enter, all rise, and the Marshal of the Court announces, "The Honorable, the Chief Justice and the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! All persons having business before the Honorable, the Supreme Court of the United States, are admonished to draw near and give their attention, for the Court is now sitting. God save the United States and this Honorable Court." When the Justices and everyone else are seated, the clerk then introduces me, saying, "Thomas Paprocki, representing a group of Polish-American lawyers from the Advocates Society of Chicago." I get up, wearing my black clerical suit and Roman collar, go to the podium and face the Chief Justice of the United States, who acknowledges me with the greeting, "Mister Paprocki."

I glance over at Justice Scalia and see him nod towards Monsignor Vaghi sitting in the gallery as if to say, "See, I told you so!"

A humorous anecdote, yes, but also one in which we see a man comfortable with his clergy and proud of his faith.

Father Scalia also related a humorous anecdote in his father's funeral homily, how one day his father went to church for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but quickly departed when he discovered that he was in his son's confessional line! As they discussed this later, the father was not about to go to confession to his son, priest or not, and the son was relieved not to have heard his father's confession! Again we see a man of faith, with no qualms about confessing his sins to a priest, well, as long as the priest was not his son! But he nevertheless knew that it was in this Sacrament that he would encounter his heavenly father to receive His merciful forgiveness.

The Gospel passage that we have just heard is from Saint Luke, who dedicates the whole of chapter 15 to the theme of forgiveness. He presents three parables to make his point. Each one deals with "lost and found," that is, lost to sin and found in forgiveness.

The first two parables are short. The shepherd goes after the lost sheep and the woman seeks out the lost coin. These two parables would

have sounded foreign to the people to whom Jesus was speaking, as one would not normally leave ninety-nine sheep behind to find one or spend the oil in the lamp and sweep the house to find the lost coin. They would have seen these actions as a waste of time and resources. Christ gives us a new way and a new example. We who work in the Church to form disciples see this example. We go forth to find the lost. We go forth to seek the forgotten. We go forth spending our time and resources to carry the sheep home to Christ. There is no more important mission than to bring sinners home to Jesus Christ and help them be His disciples.

In Luke 15:11-32, we heard the parable of the Prodigal Son and his brother. Notice that the parable starts with the son hating his father. This is apparent because the son asks for his inheritance, implying that the son considers the father as dead to him. The father in his kindness lets him go. The son eventually comes to his senses and realizes that he was wrong and his father was just. He returns to his father, not to his house, because he now has no property rights. The father sees his son returning, looks on him with compassion, runs to him and embraces his son. The son acknowledges his sin and says he no longer deserves to be called his son; he was planning on adding that he should be treated as one of his servants, but before can

say that, the father calls for a ring and sandals to be put on his son and for the fatted calf to be killed for a party. The older brother reacts with envy and wrath rather than sharing in the joy of his father and his brother. Envy prevents us from recognizing God's generosity in lavishing His gifts as He chooses. His father responds by pointing out to the older brother the he has always been with him. Thus, the older brother is also fixated on the property and not on his relationship with his father. He fails to see what is truly important.

Even from the lofty perch of an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Antonin Scalia, did not lose sight of the overriding importance of his relationship with his heavenly father and the desire for his merciful love. As Father Scalia said in the conclusion of his father's funeral homily, we also say here today: "We are here, then, as he would want: to pray for God's inexplicable mercy to a sinner; to this sinner, Antonin Scalia. Let us not show him a false love, and allow our admiration to deprive him of our prayers. We continue to show affection for him and do good for him by praying for him, that all stain of sin be washed away, that all sins be healed, that he be purified of all that is not Christ. That he rest in peace. . . .

“Jesus himself becomes present here today, under the form of bread and wine, so that we can unite all of our prayers of thanksgiving, sorrow and petition with Christ himself, as an offering to the Father. And all of this, with a view to eternity, stretching towards heaven, where we hope to enjoy that perfect union with God himself” and to see all of our loved ones again, and with them rejoice in the communion of saints.

May God give us this grace. Amen.