

Saint Edmund Homily 2021

No dictionary has adequately explained the difference between complete and finished.

- Some people say there is no difference between them. Here is one person's explanation.
- When you marry the right woman, you are COMPLETE.
- When you marry the wrong woman, you are FINISHED.
- When the right one catches you with the wrong one, you are COMPLETELY FINISHED!
- Before I'm finished and the Edmundites are complete, I want to revisit some past homilies.

Edmund's life spanned four monarchs: Henry II, Richard the Lion-Hearted, John, and Henry III.

- Edmund lived through the signing of the Magna Carta;
two general councils of the Church – Lateran III and Lateran IV;
and several Crusades, of which he vigorously preached the Sixth.

Fr. Joe Waite used alteration to describe the post-conciliar times in which Saint Edmund lived.

- He depicted them as "critical, challenging, crucial, and changing times.
- Everywhere one looked in those "dark, disturbing, doubting, discouraging" times one saw "*ideas rife with rebellion, adaptation, and renewal.*"
- It was no time for those opposed to rocking the boat –
the ship of Church and State was already tossing wildly to and fro
upon the stormy seas of the realities of the times.
- It was no time for the timid, the doubting, or the uncommitted.
- What was called for, what was needed, was Christ's steadying presence of hope in the boat –
a man for the times – a man of courage, a man of faith, of hope and unflinching loyalty."

Inspired by Edmund's life and John's gospel, Waite made this observation when Novice Director.

- "Because Edmund's life is the recorded denial of today's most cherished motivations:
self-indulgence, sensation, self-fulfillment, success, and sex;
his comparatively simple and self-effacing story sounds harsh and unattractive to many.
- Edmund dared to choose Christ, had faith to follow Christ, and loyalty to stay with Christ.
- As Edmund of Abingdon had to choose – so must we all – either self or Christ."

In 2003, I compared Edmund's vision of greatness with the vision described by rap artists.

- I used Puff Daddy's "Mo Money – Mo Problems" to underscore Edmund's generosity.
- And Edmund's caution, "*Don't become possessed by your possessions.*"
- I used P-Diddy's song, "What You Want," to look at current hopes and desires.
- What are the essential principles that guide our lives?
- *Where are we headed, and where do we need to go?*

Saint Edmund knew where he stood, what he stood for, and where he needed to go.

- To know where you're going, Tupac Shakur said, *look at where you've been.*
- Moreover, Tupac asks us, "what have you learned along the way?"

Edmund sought to know and understand the best teachers of his day.

- Edmund knew, if you want to be the best person, fill your mind with only the best thoughts.
- From whom did Edmund find his best thoughts, his inspiration?
*Hugh of St. Victor, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great,
St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of St. Victor.*

It would be an error to judge Edmund as an ineffectual impractical "otherworldly" idealist.

- Edmund was, also, a prudently practical pragmatic person of this very human world.
- Father Francis Gokey had this to say about him on Saint Edmund's Day in 1976.
- That day Dr. Edward Henry was inaugurated the 13th president of Saint Michael's College.

"History knows Edmund not only as a pastor, missionary, and preacher, but also, *principally* as scholar and teacher because his prolific academic career fell in the initial crucial stages of development of the famed Oxford University.

At an early age, he studied in Paris and became the first known doctor at Oxford, where for years he was famous as a teacher of mathematics and literature.

Later, while teaching theology, he introduced the new logic of Aristotle to England. One of Edmund's biographers wrote: *'In his day Edmund stood alone, unrivaled, the master preeminent, to whom all scholars turned, from whom none wished to differ.'*

In 2009, Fr. Cray captured the importance of Edmund bringing Aristotle to Oxford this way.

- "No Edmund, no Aristotle; no Aristotle, no inductive method;
- no inductive method, no British science;
- no British science, no industrial or technological revolutions.
- Without Saint Edmund, we would all be sitting in the dark tonight, with only bull rushes soaked in mutton drippings for light sources.

His 2009 homily helped us see religion loses its vitality when it no longer challenges us.

- We are neither religious nor spiritual if our religion and spirituality fail to instill character and integrity.

Father Theroux focused on Edmund's integrity and character in his 2011 homily.

- Addressing "character," Dave said this:

"Stephen Covey in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* notes that we have allowed the cult of personality to dominate our consciousness of who matters in our world.

However, Covey sees that we are beginning to turn back to character as what matters most in persons.

In the cult of personality, the person's moral character is of little interest and has no influence.

People live in imitation of what shows and what attracts.

There is no inner core of truth to the person, only a persona that is contrived for the sake of appeal and imitation.

And each new wave of personalities replaces the other with newer and more bizarre fashions."

- "Character, by contrast, has an inner moral core of truths that direct the person – beliefs that shape their lives and the lives of others. These persons attract others not by what they seem but rather by what they stand for. Imitation of them is an imitation of actions rooted in convictions that compel them to act. These persons transform the way the world *works* rather than the way the world *looks*. People of good character build the kingdom of God and bring all of creation to God."

Character distinguished Edmund and framed the way he lived his life.

- For Edmund, perfection is found in living *humbly* concerning yourself, *amicably* concerning your neighbor, and *honorably* concerning God.
- Such is achieved through a rigorous self-searching that reveals our need for God and a reshaping of our lives following the truths revealed in the scriptures.
- Edmund advocated a life of virtue that we are all called to espouse.
- For Edmund, Jesus shows us the way to rid ourselves of sin (*purgative way*), fill our lives with light (*illuminative way*), and unite us with God (*unitive way*).
- God asks as much of us today as God asked of Edmund in his day.
- The task is simple but most demanding: Become holy as God would have us be holy.

In his quest to be holy, Edmund opened himself to God's call.

- That is the good segway to Father McQuillen's homily in 2000 and some final thoughts.
- McQuillen never mentioned Saint Edmund in his St. Edmund's Day homily.
- Instead, he focused on the unexpected turns our lives take to fulfill God's providential plan.

Paul spoke to laypersons, involved with an Edmundite apostolate, and their important role.

- He underscored how God uses the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary and how God uses the possible to accomplish the impossible.
- Paul pointed out that Father Cronogue said he would work anywhere but at St. Michael's and he would work anywhere but in the Edmundite Missions.
- Yet most of Cronogue's apostolic ministry would be at St. Michael's and most of McQuillen's apostolic ministry would be in the Edmundite Missions.

The deaths of Cronogue and McQuillen were among the ten Edmundite deaths the last 6 years.

- The most recent ones were Ray Doherty and Roger Lacharite.
- Like Cronogue and McQuillen, Doherty and Lacharite were synonymous with the College and the Edmundite Missions.

The Edmundite mission is not finished and its apostolic work is not complete with their passing.

- Why? Because of the very mission of the Edmundites. And what is that mission? It's this:
- You are an integral part of the Church and her mission.
- Your participation is vital to the Church and her mission.
- Your gifts and talents are needed to build that mission.
- You are called from being a stranger and alien to be a full partner.

We're still living in critical, challenging, crucial and changing times, *Waite described*.

- Secular culture is still preoccupied with self-indulgence, sensation, self-fulfillment, and sex.
- Our world still needs prudently practical pragmatic persons, *Gokey identified*.
- We need those to whom scholars will turn and from whom no one will wish to differ.
- We desperately need effective individuals of integrity and character, *Theroux cited*.
- We need those with solid moral cores, who are rooted in convictions that transform the world.
- Without Edmund we'd be in the dark and dependent on mutton drippings for light (*Cray*).
- It might be your gifts and your talents that light the future and build a new world.
- Let God use ordinary you to do extraordinary things as *McQuillen observed*.
- **What other possible choice does God have to do the impossible?**