

HOMILY FOR 28th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

I want to tell you two stories. Each unique. Both important.

The first took place during World War II. It is the story of Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned in the South Pacific.

One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. Once airborne, Butch realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank.

Without enough fuel to complete his mission his flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet. As he was returning he spotted a squadron of Japanese bombers speeding toward the American fleet. He could neither reach his squadron to bring them back nor make it to the ship to warn them of the attack.

Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. With wing-mounted 50 calibers blazing, he charged in -- attacking one surprised enemy plane after another. When he exhausted his ammunition he dove at the planes trying to at least clip off a wing or a tail. The Japanese became so exasperated that they took off in another direction.

For the action that he took he became the Navy's first Ace of WW II and the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. A year later he was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29.

His hometown would not allow his memory to die. And today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man.

My second story concerns a man named Easy Eddy. At the time, Al Capone virtually owned the city of Chicago. He enmeshed the city in everything from bootlegging to prostitution and murder. Easy Eddy was Capone's lawyer. And he was very good at it.

To show his appreciation Capone afforded Eddy not only great financial rewards but also every modern convenience including an estate that occupied an entire Chicago city block.

But Eddy had a soft spot. He had a son that he loved very much. Nothing was too good for his son. He gave him only the best. And despite his involvement with crime, he even tried to teach him the difference between right and wrong.

But there were two things that Easy Eddy couldn't do. He couldn't give his son a good name and he couldn't give him a good example. And so he made the most difficult decision of his life. He gave up his employment with Al Capone and in an attempt to rectify the many

wrongs he had committed he turned himself in to the police and testified against Al Capone and the Mob. He is credited with being one of the major reasons that Al Capone's empire crumbled.

A year later Easy Eddy was gunned down and killed on a Chicago street. But he had made that one final gift to his son....the gift of integrity.

Now what do these stories have to do with each other? That's simple. Easy Eddy was the father of Butch O'Hare.

And what do Butch and Eddy have to do with today's Gospel....everything. For the Gospel teaches us that all of us are invited to the Feast of God's Kingdom. But, for our part, we must come prepared...in the words of the Gospel, dressed for the part. And our clothing for God's kingdom is not Calvin Klein or Versace. Our clothing for God's kingdom is a life dressed in integrity and honesty. It is a life filled with the heroism of virtue and the courage to work to make right all those mistakes that we can so easily make.

The heroes in life...the heroes of God's kingdom....are not just those whose greatness is recognized by medals or accolades. More often than not the heroes of God's kingdom are people like you and me and Easy Eddy who repent of our failings and try to do what is right and what is good in each and every moment of our lives.

