

**CONFIRMATION HOMILY
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Have you ever heard of Frank Abignale, Jr.?

His story was made famous by Leonardo DiCaprio in the film *Catch Me If You Can*. Frank Abignale Jr. was one of the biggest phonies of all time. Beginning when he was 16 years old and by the time he was 20, Frank had conned millions of dollars out of companies and individuals by assuming fake identities: as an airline pilot, a doctor, an attorney, and an FBI agent. He fooled everyone in his path and earned the reputation as being the biggest phony in the world before he had even reached legal age.

Nobody likes a phony or a fake and none of us would want to be known as one. Phonies or fakes take advantage of others and none of us enjoys being taken advantage of. This is especially true in relationships. When we want to build a relationship with someone, we want to be sure that we can trust them – that they are a true friend.

There's a song by a group called Linkin Park that captures this need that we all have to find love that is real and not phony. It's called "Somewhere I Belong," expressing the desire to find someplace out there where love is real, not fake or phony.

Somewhere I Belong - Linkin Park

I wanna heal, I wanna feel, what I thought was never real

I wanna let go of the pain I've felt so long.

I wanna heal, I wanna feel, like I'm close to something real.

I wanna find something I've wanted all along

Somewhere I belong.

We all hope and pray that we will find friends and especially spouses who are the real thing. We call people like that *authentic*. Well, today, we are celebrating the fact that you have responded to the invitation to enter into a relationship with the most authentic person in human history: Jesus Christ. Jesus is authentic. In the Creed, we say that he is "God from God, light from light, true God from true God." We also say that he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man" and that he "suffered death" - "was crucified, died, and was buried." He is the real thing. He is authentic. And his love is authentic. How do we know? Because he gave his life for us.

Real love is unselfish and wants nothing in return. That's the kind of love that God offers to us. God's love is selfless and unconditional...he wants only to give to us.

That's what it means to be holy. God is holy because his love is authentic. And he invites you to be holy as well. Sometimes, when we hear the word holy, we think that it means that we have to be perfect. That's not true. God is not calling us to be perfect but to be authentic. That means that we are called to love as God loves...unselfishly. I didn't come here today to confirm you because you're perfect. I'm here today to confirm that you are authentic followers of Jesus. Your pastor, your catechists, and your director of religious education have assured me that you are authentic. The oil that I will anoint you with is like a sealant symbolizing that you've chosen to live in such a way that will not allow phoniness to seep through the cracks and take hold of you. It will seal you as an authentic follower of Jesus. It will seal in your holiness.

Being an authentic follower of Jesus nowadays is not easy because so much of our world is not authentic. It's easier to be phony or fake. Knowing this, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, recently shared some advice for how to be holy – how to be an authentic follower of Jesus. In fact, he said, we can find holiness through 3 simple steps:

1. going to Mass on Sunday.
2. beginning and ending the day in contact with God.
3. making decisions according to the Ten Commandments.

Let's take a look at these 3 steps to see how they can help us to be holy - to be authentic followers of Jesus.

First, going to Mass on Sunday. Simply going to church every Sunday will not make us holy. There's no magic involved. In fact, spending more time in church will not make you holy any more than spending time in a garage will make you a car. Going to Mass is a key to holiness only if you pop the hood and allow Jesus to get inside of you and fix what is broken. And the fact is, all of us are broken. That's why we start the Mass by admitting that we have greatly sinned, in our thoughts and in our words, in what we have done and in what we have failed to do. Admitting our brokenness is a sign of being authentic and that's the first step to holiness, opening ourselves up to receiving Jesus in the Eucharist so that we can become more like him

Second, beginning and ending our day in contact with God. St. Paul taught us to pray always. That doesn't mean that we should always be saying prayers. To pray always means to be in contact with God at all times...simply aware of his presence and from time to time throughout the

day, conversing with him. The best way to do that is to begin your day by responding to God's tap on the shoulder. God begins each day in contact with us...it's up to us to open ourselves up to that contact. When we do that, we find ourselves more aware of his presence throughout the day. And when we end our day, making contact with God nicely wraps the ribbon around an entire day of praying always...of authentically following Jesus by walking with him instead of telling him to wait in the car while we go about our business.

Third, making decisions according to the Ten Commandments. Nowadays, rules get a bad rap. People don't like to be told what to do. What we forget is that every relationship has rules. If we want to authentically show our love for someone, we respect the rules they ask of us. If a friend's name is Tim and he asks you not to call him Timmy, he's just asked created a rule for your relationship. If you want to protect that relationship, you'll abide by the rule. If you want to aggravate him or even hurt him, you'll break the rule and call him Timmy despite his wishes. That's a simple example, but the same holds true of all the commandments. God gives us the commandments as a way of showing authentic love for him (the first 3 commandments) and for others (the last 7 commandments). Making decisions based on the 10 commandments is a powerful way of

showing authentic love – love that is selfless and interested in the good of others.

So, in a few moments, I'm going to invite you to stand and I'll be asking you questions about what you truly believe. In essence, I'll be asking you to promise not to be a phony but to be holy – to be authentic. Each time you respond, I DO to my questions, it's your way of saying, "Yes, I want to be holy...I want to be an authentic follower of Jesus."

Then, together with your pastor and the other priests present, I'm going to raise my hands over you and pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you with the gifts you need to be holy. You can tell who authentic followers of Jesus are because you can see the Holy Spirit's gifts working in them: wisdom, understanding, reverence, knowledge, fear of the Lord, courage, and counsel. As we pray that prayer, you'll bow your heads, because authentic people are humble, not haughty.

Finally, you will be coming forward as your way of saying that you believe Jesus is the real thing and that you want to live as his authentic follower. I will anoint you with sacred chrism saying, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit" – an action that truly seals you from the phoniness that Satan plans to tempt you with throughout life. You'll respond AMEN as your way of saying, "Yes, I want the real thing – JESUS – not that phony

stuff that Satan has to offer.” “Yes, I will strive to be holy by going to Mass on Sunday, beginning and ending my day in contact with God, and making decisions based on the Ten Commandments.”

[read from questionnaires]

By the way, if you're wondering what ever happened to Frank Abignale Jr., he served time in prison, but eventually became a legitimate and successful businessman, consulting banks, corporations, and even the FBI on how to detect phonies like he used to be. In a sense, he's doing for others what your catechists have done for you these past few years: helping you learn the difference between what's phony and fake and what's real and authentic. Like the Linkin Park song says, "I wanna feel like I'm close to something real. I wanna find something I've wanted all along: somewhere I belong." Well, there IS somewhere you belong and you've found it. Today, you're choosing the real thing - Jesus Christ and his Church. May you always be his authentic follower and may all of us work together to be holy because our God is holy.

May God give us this grace. Amen.