



Come and See!

June 17, 2018

The Word...

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High...
They that are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be...
(from Ps 92)

Pondering the Word...

I read a Facebook post the other day from a friend whose youngest will be a senior in high school this fall. This girl was “the baby” when our other kids were making their way through middle school into high school. I responded, “I’m a senior too—just in a different category!”

I love the image in today’s psalm of being “planted” in God’s house and bearing fruit even in old age. I am at the age—as are most of my friends—of becoming the oldest generation, with our parents returning to God and the kids heading out to make their own way, and having kids of their own. But I’m having a hard time convincing my mind that my body just can’t do what it did even five years ago; that I can’t just spring into action after being sedentary all winter. I don’t quite consider myself “old” yet, but my definition of old sure has changed recently!

It’s such a comfort to feel my roots firmly planted in God; that even if I can’t bear the same *amount* of fruit I used to, the fruit I do bear can still be sweet and nourishing, not bitter or tough. What if it is that, through a sturdy and vigorous faith I can, like the mustard seed in today’s gospel, be a source of refuge for others? What if, instead of constantly “producing,” the fruit I offer is a comforting place of shade and rest?

It is good to give thanks to the Lord for life’s blessings and challenges that have fed and nurtured our growth. Let us praise God’s name every day by continuing to flourish in his courts here on earth!

Living the Word...

I can almost see the look of recognition on my peers’ faces, the nods of understanding from those who are older, and perhaps “ohs” of acknowledgement from young adults who see their parents aging. When my mom, who died last year at 93, was struggling with the growing limitations of age, I remember we came to the conclusion that “Resignation would be giving up. Acceptance is opening up to what is.” I hope each day I can apply these same wise words to myself. Awareness and acceptance of life as it is is a hallmark of a healthy spiritual life, regardless of our religion. It is the basis for the well-known Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr: “Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change those I can; and, the wisdom to know the difference.”

Regardless of your age, pray this prayer, pen and paper in hand, and write down, in clear, concise language what you can and cannot change. Be optimistic but realistic. Then offer it all to God.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jun 18: *Ahab said, "Give me your vineyard...Naboth answered, "LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral heritage." Ahab (was) disturbed and lying down on his bed, he turned away from food. (1Kgs 21: 1-16)*

Ahab, Israel's king, is a spoiled brat. He doesn't get his way so he goes home sulking and is complicit in Naboth's murder. Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But perhaps there's more to it. Perhaps Naboth's upholding of God's law casts a light on how far Ahab has strayed. He sees Naboth's righteousness contrasted with his own sinfulness, an awareness God recognizes later in the story when Ahab repents. I wish I could say we've advanced beyond this kind of triviality, or that we've grown more aware, but the news sure doesn't bear that out. Think about times when you've been denied something—a trivial thing or a big thing. What did you learn about yourself? It's not wrong to be disappointed and to sulk for a bit, but as we talked about yesterday, there comes a time for acceptance. If you are still holding on to a disappointment, pray God will help you see his will and teach you what you are to learn from loss.

Jun 19: *"Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned." (Ps 51)*

Do you recognize this psalm? We say it a lot during Lent, but it's a great prayer to say on a regular basis because...well...we sin a lot and are in need of God's mercy all the time. Once when I was feeling quite self-righteous during my examen and couldn't think of one thing I had done that day that constituted a "sin," God poked me to see that that feeling in and of itself was the greatest of all sins—pride! I can always rely on God to set me straight and give us both the opportunity to experience mercy—him giving and me receiving—something we enjoy together! Allow God to lavish mercy on you today by acknowledging your need for it.

Jun 20: *Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask for whatever I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit." (2 Kgs 2:1, 6-14)*

In essence, Elisha asks Elijah, 'I want to be more than you have been—doubly more prophetic, doubly more dedicated to God;' in other words, 'I want to be better than you.' It reminds me of the words of Jesus from John 14: 12: "You will do these things and even greater things because I am going to the Father." St. Ignatius Loyola tells us that when we pray, always ask for the grace we want and don't ask for too little. Elisha is not being greedy or prideful. He asks for the grace to grow and expand on Elijah's courage and wisdom so he can further God's Kingdom. Don't be afraid to ask God for more so you too can further the Kingdom too!

Jun 21: *"But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions." (Mt 6:7-14)*
"Those who cannot forgive others break the bridge over which they themselves must pass." Confucius

Jun 22: *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness." (Mt 6:19-23)*

The translation for a "sound eye" is an eye that is pure or has a single focus; a bad eye is one that is baleful or menacing. I guess one could argue Jesus is referring to what comes from inside the heart and mind of a person and not necessarily what comes from outside, but I wonder: we are inundated with bad news, stories of evil, and blatant examples of perjury and immorality accepted as commonplace. Two pieces of wisdom come to mind: the first, from Fred Rogers who, when talking years ago about the power of television warns us, 'we wouldn't feed our families trash, so we shouldn't feed their minds with trash either.' The other piece of wisdom: "To tolerate is to teach." What we put up with in society—even if we would never actively or personally participate in evil—is what we teach as acceptable to our kids. Try to avoid exposing them to the ugliness when they are young; then actively engage with them in discussing of your values when they begin to venture out in the world. Let them see you taking a stand for what you claim to believe.

Jun 23: *Can you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Do not worry about tomorrow." (Mt 6:24-34)*
"Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength... It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength." (Corrie ten Boom)