

The First Sunday of Advent (Dec. 2/3 2018)

Happy New Year. It is the beginning of the New Liturgical Year, and a time to begin our Preparation for one of the central Mysteries of our faith The Mystery of the Incarnation..... The mystery that Our God chose to become One like us in all things but Sin ! Wow what a mystery to try and get my head around ??? I just cannot fathom such a mystery of my own volition It would be somewhat akin to punching all of this information that I have about God into a computer and saying this is what I know this is what I believe I am expecting that my computer would spit back out at me a response :

Can't Compute ! Can't Compute ! Can't Compute.

I would not be surprised by such a response ! Why I am not able to fathom it myself. !

This in itself helps us to see the importance of the gift that Jesus offered us as He prepared to depart this world The only gift that can really help me begin to understand

The Gift of the Holy Spirit Here are His own words :

“But very truly I tell you the sober truth :

It is much better for you that I go.

If I fail to go, the Paraclete will never come to you,

Whereas if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16:7)

We can never sufficiently emphasize the importance of that promise of Jesus. This is His ultimate parting gift to us.

Let us look at his own original group of disciples, what an example. Before they received this gift of the Holy Spirit they were fumbling, and bumbling, and stumbling. They couldn't deal with the fact that he was about to die, that he was about to leave them.

How easy it is for us to understand them and their circumstances. They had grown accustomed to Him, to His presence, to his leadership Without Him they were afraid they would be totally lost.

Like ourselves, they didn't like or didn't want change. They wanted to hang onto what they knew, what they were familiar with, what was working for them. Are we not just like them ?

The gift of the Holy Spirit, totally transformed those initial followers, from tired, lonely, insecure followers, into the great proclaimers of His messageHis Love. Now it wasn't without trials but they did for sure receive the gifts that we celebrate as being some of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit :

Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Awe (Fear of the Lord)

These gifts were given them at Pentecost as we know, and while there was great excitement, and energy, and enthusiasm in that event It is real important to realize,

that the gifts only began to reach their full potential as they began to claim them, and put them into Practice. The same holds true for us ! We have received gift of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized, again when we were Confirmed ! But have we attempted to nurture and bring those Gifts to life. If we want the gifts of the Lord, and ultimately the gift of His Holy Spirit, then we have got to practice those gifts. Every gift that the Lord gives is brought to Maturity by practice in our lives.

Otherwise, it is as I have said a number of times previously,

I could place my hands on that piano over there and ask God every single day to make me a piano-player Now I know full well that ain't going to happen ! However if I do open up the piano, and practice, and take some direction, and lessons it will happen in time. I will mature the gift.

It has often been said “ God is not in the business of giving me what I want but rather what I need” ! He will provide what I need but only practice will bring it to its full potential.

Many people ask the question :

How can there be a Good or just God, in the presence of so much suffering and evil in the world ? Sometimes the addendum is :

Why does God appear to be doing nothing about it ?

They are indeed very important questions, and certainly deserve our attention !

The questions cut to the core of the issue of “Who is God ? What do I believe about Him ? What beliefs do I hold about God that are flat out untrue ? What are some of the things that I have been told along the way about God that are just not true ?

I assure I have picked up a whole lot of those along the way.

Now I realize I have just got to let go of some of those images of God that have been a part of my life for years. The big question for each of us is about our IMAGE of God.

How do I really Imagine the God that I believe in ? What is my real Image of God. ? Is God for me or against me ? Is He out to ‘get me’ or ‘Save Me’ ! Really important stuff.

I read a marvelous quote during the week by Cynthia Bourgeault, she is a great teacher in the way of faith and trust, she said :

“ Must we be whiplashed incessantly between joy and sorrow, expectation and disappointment ? Is it not possible to live from a place of greater equilibrium, to find a deeper and steadier current ?”

Wow that is the real question ? Can we not live out of a better place her answer is a Resounding 'YES' ... but it takes a lot of practice and a lot of letting go !

She says : "The good news is that this deeper current does exist and you actually can find it"

In short we have got to develop a new way of thinking and a new way of seeing ! We have got to let go of some notions that we still hold onto about God, and begin to live anew our real experience of Him ... Our Creator.

In his wonderful book "When Bad Things Happen to Good People, Rabbi Harold Kushner dispels a common myth about pain and sufferingand he invites us to see our way through pain and suffering in a whole new way :

The conventional explanation, that God sends us the burden because He knows that we are strong enough to handle it, has it all wrong.

Fate, not God, sends us the problem. When we try to deal with it, we find out that we are not strong. We are weak; we get tired, we get angry, overwhelmed But when we reach the limits of our own strength and courage, something unexpected happens. We find reinforcement coming from a source outside of ourselves. And in the knowledge that we are not alone, that God is on our side, we manage to go on

Like Jacob in the Bible, like every one of us at one time or another, you faced a scary situation, prayed for help, and found out that you were a lot stronger, and a lot better able to handle it, than you would have thought you were. In your desperation, you opened your heart in prayer, and what happened ? You didn't get a miracle to avert a tragedy. But you discovered people around you, and God beside you, and strength within you to help you survive the tragedy. I offer that as an example of prayer being answered.

What a wonderful example !