

Reflection

7/11/2020

Last Sunday I attended Mass in the church under the new regulations. To say it was a different experience is putting it lightly. I hope this is not how things will be from here forward. The crowd was small, the social distancing barriers and plexiglass shields do not play well to the welcoming nature of St. Mary's. But these are different times and we must go with them.

Father Yu spoke in his homily of chaos, the chaos that existed before there was order. As far as I was concerned, he could have been talking about last week. We live in a world ravaged by virus; a country being rocked by the effects of police violence and the realization of racial inequality. We are in a country divided, a world trying to make sense of senseless situations. Through it all, we try to maintain order, maintain direction, maintain sanity.

In the second reading, Paul writes "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed to us". This should provide us hope today as it did back when they were first written. I don't know about you, but I am having a tough time trying to maintain my sanity when I can't go where I used to go and do what I used to do. It's not much consolation that I will be rewarded at a later time. Its like the stony ground from the Gospel and I am facing trials and tribulations, trying not to let the word fall away. I know glory will be revealed to me, but it is hard waiting and wondering if I will make it through.

For me, these are really trying times. I am a very social person; I thrive on being around other people. Limiting by circle of friends feels like I'm limiting my life. I seem to be spending a lot more time in front of a screen communicating with the "outside world". Going to Mass fed my spiritual as well as my social hunger. When I see what the new normal as in the church, I see that I will have to make a change on the inside. I think that is what a lot of people are realizing.

Change is hard, it can't be done without some form of help and support. It seems everyone is feeling the frustration of having to make a change and going it alone. I have seen commercials on tv and seen billboards that have the "we are in this

together” message, but I still feel like I’m in this alone. Now more than ever, we need to be brothers and sisters to each other. We should be wearing masks to protect others, but we must be patient with those who, for some reason, choose not to wear one. We have to appreciate and respect our brothers and sisters who are front line in the struggle, the doctors and nurses, the mail carriers and the trash collectors, the grocery workers and I can’t forget the utility workers who keep the lights on and the water flowing. We need to understand those that are frustrated and the only they know to speak out is through protest. There is a lot going on and whatever your views, we must respect the other side. I have taken a position that I will not argue, I will educate. I will not villainize, I will empathize.

That’s what the world needs now, some help and support. We can be that help and support, maybe not for the whole world, but for our corner of it. I am going to do that by not spreading rumors, by not judging those who refuse to do what is being recommended. As Jesus said in the Gospel reading today, the word falls on all and reacts according to the soil on which it lands. The same is true with the best advice that is given; some is taken and heeded, some is taken and discarded, some is never taken. I know that if I judge each person’s response, I will cause myself undue stress in this stressful period.

As I said, I will educate, not argue. If everyone took that attitude, we could relieve some stress and remove some conflict that we are facing. Rather than argue the existence of institutional racism, provide examples to educate. If you can’t come up with examples, then you need to educate yourself. Rather than argue the about whether to defund the police, educate on the issues with the present system and the benefits or lack thereof of the system. Rather than argue on the wearing of masks, I will educate on the advantages and disadvantages of wearing or not wearing the mask. I take every opportunity to educate myself so I can be better enabled to educate others. I do my best to provide unbiased information, sometimes I fail, but nobody’s perfect. All I can do is my best.

I also said that I will not villainize, I will empathize. Once I have done my best to educate, I will not villainize those who just choose to ignore any facts presented. That is the hardest part for me. When I feel someone is not responding to or just ignoring facts and logic, my first reaction is to tell myself that they are against me. I know I am not alone in this as evidenced by the conflicts that are reported in the

news every day. It seems to be easier to fight than to reason that a person may have been hurt so deeply that there is no ability trust in the facts. I will have empathy and respect a person's choice to respond as they see fit.

What the world needs now is love, God's love! That is what will bring order to chaos. It is time for each of us to reach deep inside ourselves and find God's love and share that love in our part of the world. It's time for each of us to make fertile soil for the word to fall onto and blossom. Then we need to share the harvest of the fruits of the word so all may be fed. There is enough divisive rhetoric and conflict nurturing to last a lifetime. Don't let that spread like a weed into your homes and workplaces. Coming together in love as we do here, as we can now do in the church, as we can in our own social circles and practicing acts of good will, acts of charity, acts of love will choke out the weeds of hatred and conflict and allow us all to harvest the fruits of the Spirit and be able to share in the glory that has been promised us.

In closing, I'd like to share one of my favorite verses from Paul's letter to the Romans:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit.

Hope is something I pray for every day, its so easy to be hopeless.