

10th Sunday C... It's About Life

Introduction...

At times there seems to be so much Bad News around us...

Isis, refugees, Opiod addictions and deaths, terrible weather, flooding, people losing their homes... on and on.

If it bleeds it leads.

(Well, at least the Penguins are winning.)

(Within the next several months we will be subjected to millions and millions of dollars of ads urging and seducing us to be even more fearful and angry. How sad!)

What are we to do? Sometimes I just want to get away to a quiet stream and do some trout fishing – for 6 months at least!

I Good News?

The Good News of life and healing and compassion in today's Scripture readings seem so far away and almost untouchable.

Let me tell you a wonderful story... we need to hear good stories don't we, lest all the bad news overwhelms us.

True story:

At the Seattle Special Olympics a number of years ago nine contestants, all physical or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

At the gun they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back... every one of them. One girl with Down 's syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "this will make it better." Then all link linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

Why? Why does this story touch so many people?

Because deep down most people intuit something beautiful in this story, something good and compassionate, something that gives life and joy... something of God.

Don't we need such stories in our lives?

We need to be reminded that God wants us to flourish, to be joyful and happy.

Isn't that what today's readings are about?

Elijah feels compassion and gives back a living child to his weeping mother.
"See, your son is alive."

What does she say?
Now indeed I know that you are a man of God.
She knows that God is in her life and her world.

In the Gospel Jesus looks with compassion upon a woman escorting her dead son to the grave.
She was a widow and this was her only son.
In Jesus' culture she was alone now, with no one to care for her in her elder years. She would even have to beg food.

He stepped forward and touched the coffin.
At this the bearers halted and he said,
"Young man, I tell you arise."

Jesus gives back this living son to his mother.

What do the people say?
"A great prophet has arisen in our midst" and "God has visited his people."

Elijah and Jesus brought God's compassion and mercy and life to their people.

II What About Us?

A question I always ask right about now is,
"So what?"
"What about us?"
Who will bring us life and compassion and mercy and affirmation and God's love ...
what we long for if we look deeply into our hearts?

Let me tell you another story, one that always speaks to me and challenges me:

Once upon a time there was a very wise man who was on his way to a village on the other side of the mountain to teach, to beg, and to call more disciples to follow his way. He intended to take a shortcut over the mountain pass to save time. But immediately the people and his friends

said, "No, don't go that way. The pass is filled with bandits lying in wait for you and if they find you don't have money or jewels they will kill you brutally.

The wise man couldn't be bothered with such warnings, and he continued on his way. Well, no sooner had he climbed high into the pass when a notorious bandit appeared, bearing down on him with sword in hand and shouting, "Your money or your life!"

The wise man looked up at the man astride his horse, pulled out his empty pockets and said, "I guess it's my life, since I have no money."

As the bandit moved toward him, sword in motion, the wise man stopped him in his tracks:

"You know the rules. If you take my life, then you must at least grant me a last wish!"

The bandit stopped. "Alright. What do you want? Make it quick old man."

The wise man said, "My wish is simple and has two parts.

First, see that great tree over there and the limb that extends far out over the path? Cut it off!" The bandit grinned and in seconds the limb lay on the ground.

"Alright old man, what is the second part?"

The wise man turned toward him and said very quietly and steadily, "Now put it back on again."

The bandit was speechless and then started laughing uproariously. "You are the stupidest man I've ever met! No one can put a limb back on a tree after it's been cut off! Insane! You're idiotic."

The wise man looked at him and said, "I am not the one who is stupid. You are. Anyone can destroy. Any child without knowledge can cut things up. Anyone can main, kill, mutilate and undo reality. It takes no power or intelligence whatsoever."

The bandit was caught off guard.

The wise man continued, "What takes power, real power, is to be able to heal, to bring life, to restore, to stand in the breach, to undo the evil and the destruction that you've done in the past. That takes real power, imagination, and creativity.

What you've done takes nothing at all. Anyone can do what you've done. They eyed each other for a long time. Then the bandit got off of his horse, laid down his sword at the wise man's feet, knelt in respect before him, and humbly asked, "Teach me that kind of power.")

We have this kind of power, don't we?

We can bring compassion and forgiveness and joy and life and affirmation into our world... and experience life by doing this.

Just stop and think for a moment...

Our power of speech, our buying and spending power,
our power of forgiveness and compassion.

Life is about what we bring to the table.

Read again the Prayer of St. Francis.

Maybe we can't undo all of the Bad News around us,
but we can bring Good News into our world...
as St. Paul speaks of in the Second Reading.

St. John Paul II challenged us to be a part of the Culture of Life, not the
Culture of Death... the culture of violence, anger, resentments, vengeance,
greed, envy, hedonism and materialism. Is this what life is all about?

Pope Francis shows us what it means to be a part of the Culture of Life when
he visited our country back in September of '15, when he eats with the
homeless, visits school kids in Harlem, stops in to encourage men in a
Philadelphia jail and challenges us to take care of our frail elderly.

Conclusion

We might ask who will bring life and joy, compassion and forgiveness into
my life?

Or can we realize that we are called to walk in the footsteps of Elijah and
Jesus and bring God's healing and life and joy and encouragement into our
world?

As we continue with the Eucharist we focus on God's love poured out for us
on the Cross as Jesus confronts the darkness and evil and sin of our world.
Then Jesus invites us to come forward to receive spiritual nourishment and
refreshment so that we can continue this mission of Jesus, for we are now
God's presence in our world.

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

What a purpose for living? What an adventure. We are not called to be entertained consumers forever seeking fulfillment from stuff. We are called to be a part of the Culture of Life.

That's what it means to be a Catholic... to follow Jesus.