

UNTO US A SAVIOR IS BORN

“I give you the gift of myself. It is all I have to give. What more could I have given you than the gift of myself?”

A story. Earlier this week I saw an obituary for a physician named Dr. Myron Resnick who died at an advanced age. Seeing that obituary took me back instantly forty-seven years to my very early days as a young priest. Our parish covered little Haverford General Hospital on West Chester Pike in Broomall. One day I was called to the hospital to anoint a man who had just died in surgery. I had never done that before. I was shown into the operating room because the man had died unexpectedly during exploratory surgery, something that was done at times before the age of the CT Scan and the MRI, and when the man went into cardiac arrest during surgery that doctor did everything he could to save that man’s life. He was not able to do so.

I arrived with my holy oils. I was met inside the Operating Room by Dr. Resnick, the surgeon. He was still visibly shaken. He welcomed me into his theatre of operations and asked my pardon for the state of the room, on the table was the man who had died, Mr. Shannon. Dr. Resnick, a man in his mid-forties, said to me, a priest in my mid-20’s, “Father, this is now more your arena than mine. Please pray for him and pray for me because I have to go tell this man’s wife that she is now a widow.” I will never forget his words. Or him. Seeing his obituary, that whole scene flooded back from my memory. I immediately thought that I am to place him on my prayer list.

Dr. Resnick was not able to save that man from dying. No. He wasn’t. And yet, isn’t that such a deep yearning in every heart and every soul of every person on this earth? Who can save us from dying? After two years of the corona-virus and yet another new variant unleashed upon the world, with millions of people dead, in all our weariness and resistance and rage; and after all the fears that well up from deep inside of us, isn’t it, at root, the fear of death that is so strong within us? Who can save us from the dying? Who can save us from the death?

The child. The child can. The Christ child can. The Christ child has. That is why he has come. To save us from the death that is the result of distrust, disobedience and fear. We cannot save ourselves. No. We cannot. But we are always looking for ways. But today let us not look for ways. Today let us look for the One. The One who was promised. The One who not only has come to us but has become one of us, like us in all things but sin.

If we can believe it, Jesus is the almighty God in the most ordinary appearance. God has come as a human person so we can hear his voice and learn his way. God has come so we can see his face and love the person he is. God has come to show us the extent of the Father’s love. God has come to extend a divine hand of forgiveness—over and over again. God has come, let us be real, to save us. To save us from sin. To save us from death. To save us from everything

that tears at us and devours us and threatens to destroy us. Jesus will die with the words of God's Good News on his lips: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

And how does the almighty God come to us? As a child. We did not see that coming. God always defies our expectations. Then, surpasses them. God knows that we so often live in fear. And right now, there are so many fears—even contradictory fears. We are battling each other. We are battling the disease. We are exhausted.

And into all of this comes a little One with a little voice. "Come to me all you who labor and are weary, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Will we? Will we come to him? The One who has first come to us? Will we let him in? Will we allow him the room, the opportunity, to tend to our fearful souls at this time? Will we accept the gift he wants to give us? Will we let him save us from death? Will we allow him to be the kind of God that He is? Meek. Humble. Serving. Caring. Saving. Little. Will we accept that God? That gift? In Christ our God is saying to us: "I give you the gift of myself. It is all I have to give. What more could I have given you than the gift of myself?"

Our presence here right now? It is our response. It is our acceptance of this most wonderful of all gifts. In faith. We believe. Thank you Jesus. We accept your love. We love you too. Please accept our gift. The gift of ourselves. And. Merry Christmas, Lord!

May the Lord bless us this Christmas day and give us his peace!