

GOD IS WITH US AND FOR US

Last evening, as I was greeting the people after the 5:15 Mass, one of our parishioners, said, “Can I talk to you for a minute?” I said, “Sure!” She said, “I’m glad I ran into you tonight, because the Gospel today really kind of upset me.” I said, “Oh - what part?” She said “All of it.” I said, “Well, why did it upset you?” And she said, “Well, you know, I try to live a good life, and it just seemed like there was just being more and more laid upon me. It’s hard enough to live a faithful life - but then it’s like, ‘well, if you fail there, no hope for you.’ It’s one thing not to kill, but another thing not to get angry, lose your patience, call people names.” She was just kind of going down the list, and she was dispirited a little. I said, “Well, I understand, but what Jesus is doing - you have to try to picture. This is part of the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes *You’re the salt of the earth. You’re the light of the world.* That’s what we heard the last couple of weeks. Now, the words we heard this week: saying, *“Listen, I didn’t come to do away with the commandments, but I want you to know there’s more to the commandments that just ‘don’t do this.’*”

He is saying, *“Yes, don’t kill - of course - but what leads to that? What’s the attitude? What’s the mindset? What’s in your heart that leads you to get so angry?”*

Or, How do you look at other people in such a way that you’re really not relating to them as a person, but you see them as an object and perhaps an object of your sexual pleasure? There, there’s something beyond that ‘just don’t commit adultery’ - there’s something else. There’s more going on here.”

With regard to anger. I was thinking in terms of my own life, I look back when I was a kid. I really liked fourth grade, but it was a difficult time for me. And, I remember I really liked my fourth-grade teacher and I was really doing everything I could to try to please her. I didn’t realize that’s what I was doing, but I was – then I got these pains in my stomach. In those days, the doctor could come to your home and he did. The doctor did his little tests and stuff and just said to my Mom, “He’s trying too hard...he’s trying to please.” And I was. I wasn’t trying to please my mother too hard - I was trying to please my teacher. But I was trying too hard and it was kind of twisting me - twisting my emotions.

And then, I remember it was Advent, and we used to be able to go home for lunch - I would ride my bicycle home. One of the Sisters had said that they didn’t have the pink candle for the Advent wreath - and I knew we had one at home. I immediately volunteered that – you know, I didn’t tell my mother that, but I volunteered that. When I went home at lunch, I made the plea “Oh Mom, I need the pink candle.” Reluctantly, she gave me the pink candle because it was for the Sisters. Back I went, and it was lunch recess. I gave it to the Sister who was on recess duty to hold for me so that I would have it to go back into the class. And then I ran around like a crazy person like you do at recess, and that upset her. She called me over and she said, “You know, I’m helping you out by holding this candle, and you’re running around like a crazy person, so I want you to cut it out.” And she went to tap my head with the candle for emphasis but she was a little overactive. And it hit me in the head and it broke the candle - in several places. So, now I had this broken pink candle that I had to go in and make my presentation with, and that was “on me”. It was just a time of trying to come to grips with the intensity of emotion in me as a little kid who was starting to grow up and just trying to contain my anger.

In games, I so wanted to win that I would just get angry if I wasn’t winning. Sometimes I would lose control and just really lose it - my eyes would get dark and people would say, “Calm down, you gotta calm down.” I remember my Dad having a talk with me; he said, “Stephen, you can’t allow your emotions to control you. You have to learn how to control them because if you don’t learn that you’re going to be at the mercy of your emotions the rest of your life.” And so they helped me, but I was just trying as a little kid. Part of the difficulty was this: I thought, then. it was all on me to do this.

What Jesus is saying is: *“It’s not all on you. It’s not. I understand that’s how you think. I understand that’s how you see it. But I want you to know, I realize that you can’t do it on your own. You can only do it with My help. I have come to liberate you. I have come to forgive you. I have come to set you free. I have come to*

lead you into the Kingdom, and I will empower you with My Spirit. And so, your spirit and My Spirit - they join in Baptism and you will always have access to My Spirit and the power of that. And My Spirit brings certain gifts to you. Wisdom: so that you'll know what to do; Understanding: so that you'll get what's really going on; Knowledge: so that you have a sense of the right decision to make; Counsel: so, you'll be able to help other people because you get it, you get life."

There's going to be an ad this afternoon at the Super Bowl: He "gets us". It's about Jesus. He gets us, all of us. Yes, he does. And He's given us His Spirit. There's a spirit of Fortitude - Courage - that you'll have the courage of your convictions and you'll stand up for what you believe. We need that in this world today.

You'll have a spirit of Devotion - dedication. You'll even have a spirit of, "Oh Lord, I know You're there and I know You protect me. I know You love me. Fear of the Lord like that - deep respect, not abject fear, but "Oh Lord, I know I'm in Your hands." But that's what we lose sight of: that the Spirit has been given.

I have the Spirit. And you have the Spirit. It's there. The Spirit lives in us. A lot of times the wisdom that we have isn't just our wisdom. It comes because the Spirit and my spirit are one. It sounds like it comes from within me and it's me, but actually it's me with the Spirit and the courage to stand up and do the things and not to give in to the anger and to learn how to bring my emotions under control.

That's what Jesus is saying: it's not just one more thing you have to do and if you're not, you're out. No - what He's saying is, "*I want you to be your best self.*" And that's what you want. That's what I want. I want to be my best self. I want to be the good angel. You want to be the good angel. A lot of times we don't believe we can be that. We can't on our own, but we can with the help of Jesus. He says, "*I've already given you the help - it's there. But I need you to believe it and to believe that I am in this with you. You are not alone. You don't have to do it all. You are to turn to me and ask Me for the help you need. But don't forget Me. That's what this is about (points to the Altar). Do this in memory of Me: Eucharist. If you don't gather for Eucharist, you run the risk of forgetting Me and you won't remember My Spirit. And you'll start to think, 'it all depends on me.'*" It doesn't.

The Lord Jesus is Emmanuel - God with us. He says, "*I've pitched my tent with you. I have made the decision. I want to live in you and for you and with you forever.*" He will never revoke that. But He needs us to become aware of that and to remember that, and then to call upon Him. And so, that's the grace for which we pray this day.

May our Lord bless us all today and give us His peace.