

June 10, 2018

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**We are not discouraged. Although our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day**

*We hold the hardness of reality and the suffering of the world until it transforms
us.*

A Drowning

This week experienced a horrible accident. 50-year-old Robert Joseph Allen, drowned while trying to rescue his son, Samuel Vicente Allen who was boarding out in the ocean. The Allen family was here on a vacation from Colorado. And this happened - two family members lost.

How does one handle such a thing as this? Belief in God must be very difficult for the family right now. One can only wonder how they are handling their pain.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians that we heard this morning must have been talking about situations like this when he said, "*Although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.*" What does this mean, and how does it happen that our inner self is being renewed while our outer self is wasting away?

A reflection by Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr

Fr. Rohr talks about a place within all of us called "*The Middle Way,*" sometimes called "the space in-between" in which we are no longer where we were and where we are not yet. This is described as a "*spiritually juicy pot*", that place where there is only Faith left.

He goes on. "All life is a lesson in learning to love more deeply. The trick is to grow in love while letting go of its attachments. Life is neither just detachment nor attachment; it's a dance between the two.

"This is the space in-between fight and flight. Some prefer to take the world, life on: to fight it, change it, fix it, and rearrange it. Others deny there is a problem at all. '*Everything is beautiful*' and look the other way.

"Both instincts avoid holding the tension, the pain, and the essentially tragic nature of human existence. We need to stand in the Middle - in the in-between - neither taking the world on from a power position, nor avoiding it for fear of the pain it will bring. By standing 'in the middle,' we hold the hardness of reality and the suffering of the world until it transforms us. Once we stand in that third spacious way, neither directly fighting nor fleeing, we are in the place of grace where new life and healing are possible."

We hold the hardness of reality and the suffering of the world until it transforms us. In other words, "*The love of God protects us from nothing as it sustains us in everything.*" This isn't just something that the Allen family needs to hold on to at this tragic time in their lives, it's something we all need to, especially in such times.

**Although our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day**

I wish I had some insights into how this happens, but I don't. Holding on to faith in dark times is not about strategy, it's about surrendering, letting go, accepting the hard times as they come into our lives. It's not information we seek, it's the willingness to let life happen to me. As I heard Austrian Benedictine Brother David Steindl-Rast say years ago, "The answer to why is - *YES.*" My brother Jesuit, Fr. Greg Boyle, says something similar, "*A pervasive theme throughout the Gospel narrative is that God comes into our lives to upset the status quo*". And American Buddhist nun, Pema Chodron, says, "*Our task is not to avoid discomfort, but to learn how to relate to it.*"

This is what I was trying to do during my convalescence this spring. This is what this helium balloon I am holding that I received from the Sheriff's department is saying this to me. Look at it - it's mostly deflated, tired looking and now mostly lying on the floor. It's usefulness seems over.

And yet, it is still beautiful to me, even more so now than when I first was given it - full, buoyant, floating. Look at it - it's still trying to reach up! It's message means even more to me now than when I first received it:

One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was I who was carrying you."

**Although our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day**

*We hold the hardness of reality and the suffering of the world
until it transforms us*

The love of God protects us from nothing as it sustains us in everything

All life is a learning to love more deeply

Let us stand and turn to the picture of Mother Mary in the rear of the church and
pray for Robert Joseph Allen, his son, Samuel Vicente Allen,

and the whole Allen family:

**Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now
and at the hour of our death. Amen.**