

September 24, 2017

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**I am the salvation of my people, says the Lord. Should they cry out to me in distress,
I will hear them, and I will be their Lord.**

*It is impossible to avoid negative emotions altogether
because to live is to experience setbacks and conflicts.*

Negative emotions and well-being

One of our parishioners sent me an article recently entitled, *Negative Emotions Are Key to Well-Being* by Tori Rodriguez in *Scientific American*, May 1, 2013. The following is a brief from that article.

"In recent years I have noticed an increase in the number of people who feel guilty or ashamed about what they perceive to be negative. Although positive emotions are worth cultivating, problems arise when people start believing they must be upbeat all the time. It is impossible to avoid negative emotions altogether because to live is to experience setbacks and conflicts. Accepting these thoughts and feelings help us shake off our shame and guilt, see our problems with greater clarity and proceed down the path to recovery. In fact, anger, fear and sadness are an important part of life, they alert us to what needs attention in us. New research shows that experiencing and accepting such emotions is vital to our mental health. Attempting to suppress them can backfire and even diminish our sense of contentment. Expressing how we feel in a journal or to another person can help bring a sense of closure."

A story of Recovery

It helps to hear stories of how people find closure to their pressures and strain. The following is one such example. It is told by Jesuit Fr. Greg Boyle about his work with gang members in east Los Angeles.

"I was invited to give an all-day training to six hundred social workers in Richmond, Virginia. I brought a Homie, Jose, with me to tell his story. He gets up and in an off-handed way says, "Ya, I guess you could say my mom and I, we didn't get along so good. I think I was six when she looked at me and she said, 'Why don't you just kill yourself, you're such a burden to me'." And the whole audience gasped. "I guess I was nine when my mom drove me to the deepest part of Baja, California. And she walks me into an orphanage, and she says, 'I found this kid.' And there she left me for ninety days until my grandmother found out where she had dumped me. And she came and rescued me."

"My mom beat me every single day of all my elementary school years with things you could imagine and some things you couldn't. I used to wear three t-shirts everyday - the first t-shirt because the blood would seep through, and the second t-shirt because you could still see it. Finally the third t-shirt, you couldn't see the blood. Kids at school would make fun of me - 'Hey, it's a hundred degrees. Why you wearing three t-shirts?'"

"And then he kind of buckles under the weight of this thing, and chokes up and gets emotional in front of these social workers, and he says, 'I wore three t-shirts well into my adult years, because I didn't want to see my wounds. But then, I started to welcome my wounds. And now I run my fingers over my wounds; they are my friends. After all, I can't help heal the wounded, if I haven't welcomed my own wounds'." Jose felt God say,

**"I am your salvation. Should you cry out to me in distress,
I will hear you, and I will be your Lord."**

Jose found closure to a lifetime of pain

Our turn

We each could look at our own lives to see where we are facing pressures and strain
and need to find closure and feel God say,

**"I am your salvation. Should you cry out to me in distress,
I will hear you, and I will be your Lord."**