

2nd Sunday of Easter - Online

Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side Do not unbelieve, but believe.

My Lord and my God!

Tension mentioned in Scripture

I wonder what kind of tension Thomas brought into that little community in the upper room that night. The disciples were rejoicing and celebrating, and Thomas comes in and breaks the euphoria. We can only imagine the expressions on their faces: disbelief, disappointment, fear, resentment - perhaps even arguing with him, trying to convince him of what they believed. I wonder if his doubts raise their's? Apparently the disciples continued to embrace him. Maybe they didn't know what else to do. The point is, they didn't give up; they stayed there - right in the middle of the tension.

This isn't the first time we have seen tension mentioned in the scriptures. Jeremiah in 626 BC received the call from God to be God's prophet. Listen to his response:

"O Lord, you have enticed me, and you have overpowered me. I have become a laughing-stock all day long; everyone mocks me. Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, 'A child is born to you, a son', making him very glad.

'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name.' But if I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name', then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:7-18). You might say there was some tension in Jeremiah's voice.

Jesus carried tension on Calvary

We heard this a lot during this past Holy Week. In the Garden, Jesus cried, "Father (*Abba*), let this cup pass from me." On the cross, he cried, "My God, my God, (*Eloi, Eloi*) why have you abandoned me!" *Abba* in Hebrew means "Daddy"; *Eloi* means "Lord." In other words, in the Garden, "Daddy" was still an intimate family member; on the cross, "Lord" was to a distant God beyond family closeness - indicating how far Jesus had fallen into his darkness. And yet we know Jesus chose to walk through his darkness and came into his own light. The word for this is resurrection.

We carry tension today

This does not mean something has gone wrong in our lives, experiencing tension is part of life. It's all around us. In fact, if we don't feel tension, we're in a coma. It's not about letting tension prevent us from living life, it's about letting tension move us into deeper life.

I'm not saying anything you don't already know. Spouses, you know the swings of married life. Parents, you know the ups and downs of raising children. Our country knows the rise and fall of tensions between "liberty and justice for all," and "liberty and justice for some." Our church knows the tension between conscience and obedience. I was told one of the features Jesuits consider in looking at men who show interest in joining the Order is if they can carry tension.

Tension means "to be stretched"

Tension, which comes from the Latin word, "*tendere*," means to be stretched, which brings discomfort from being stretched, from being moved beyond a present moment. Tension is an automatic warning system that alerts us to our being stuck in a previous place, and that it's time to be moved on. Tension can be seen as a friend, though one we do not want to hang on to.

Tension is not just a part of our lives, it is a part of life. It's a signal that life needs to be stretched into something more, something greater. We see this in all of life - in the arts, in drama. The great classics all deal with some kind of fatal flaw, some kind of obstacle to achievement along with the struggle to move beyond it. It is what gives the story line interest and meaning. We also see this dynamic in music - the technique of suspending a note from a precious chord into the next before it being finally resolved into the new chord.

The discomfort of tension moves us to a greater depth when we don't give into bitterness and blame; when we stop holding grudges; when we resist people being treated badly; when we forgive those who treat us badly; when we don't give in to our fears even when we have good reason to fear; when we are patient with ourselves for even feeling tension. Even the discomfort that comes from failing to carry tension well becomes grace when we repent, because - after all, spiritual growth is just one humiliation after another.

Easter

We just celebrated Easter. Easter didn't take away Jesus' tension, he was willing to walk through it and come into his own light. The word for that is Resurrection. Easter doesn't take

away our tensions, they give us the energy to walk through them and come into our own light.
The word for this is Resurrection

Learning to carry tension with faith places our fingers in the nail marks of Jesus and our hands in his side, as we find ourselves saying with Thomas right in middle of it all: “*My Lord and My God.*”

Happy Easter Season, Everyone!