

February 25, 2018
Second Sunday in Lent

Good and upright is the Lord. He shows us the way and guides the humble to justice.

It is good that we are here

The Vigil

Last Week, we held a vigil during the homily time for the 17 who were killed in the Florida shooting. It was difficult; it didn't feel good to be doing this, but isolating ourselves from the pain of all those people who were affected would only serve to isolate us from our own. We need to extend the love and compassion to them that have been offered to us.

Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*"

James in his epistle in 2:14-18 says, "*If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day and you say to them, 'Goodbye and good luck. Keep warm and well fed,' but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless.*"

Ann Lamott says, "*To be saved means to see everyone on earth as family - that we are all in need of healing, we are all a cry for help, we all save each other because we belong to each other.*"

Wanting Love and Compassion for some is wanting Love and Compassion for all

Offering love and compassion to others is an extension of the love and compassion we find in ourselves which we discover in many ways, including when we sit quietly alone, perhaps in a quiet church or in some place in nature. When we do, something begins to happen in us; we become aware of a larger comforting presence within us. This is beautifully described in that lovely parable, "*Footprints*":

"I was walking along the beach with my Lord, and 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. When the last scene of my life shot before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma. 'Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You, You would walk and talk with me all the way. But I'm aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don't understand why, when I need You most, You 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 then that I carried you'."

There is an energy within love and compassion that wants to be shared, a deepening of the Christ-life in us that wants to deepen the Christ-life in others. This is why I participate in the Celebrate Recovery AA program here on Wednesday evenings and in South Fork Prison Camp on Friday nights. Meeting the brothers there and hearing their stories moves something Christ-like in me to want something Christ-like to happen in them. My brother Jesuit, Fr. Greg Boyle who works with gangs in East Los Angeles, tells a story of just that.

"Our Mission Dolores church declared itself sanctuary, and as a result thousands of homeless and undocumented men have slept in that church over these many years since 1988, at times as many as a hundred a night. In the early days our first mass would be at 7:30, and the men who slept in the church helped us out. There was this frantic task to remove this very faint smell in the church that said 100 men just slept here last night. It's like the only time we ever used incense at Dolores Mission. You know it's pot-pouri, things like scented candles, we even bought cases of that "I love my carpet," those little deodorants you vacuum up. Supposed to help with cat smell or something. We did everything, and they all did their best to help us but still there were grumblings among the faithful. You could hear them complain a little bit about this faint smell as soon as they walked into the church. It would hit you, there was nothing you could do about it.

"So the Jesuits there all got together and said, 'Well you know, if you can't fix it, feature it.' So we decided to preach on it; we entered in this dialogue thing. I remember I got up to begin a homily by asking 'What does the church smell like?' Well it was silence, everyone was very uncomfortable shifting nervously. 'Come on, what's the church smell like?' And a brave soul shouted out, 'It smells like feet.' Which it did, you know. And I go, 'Well why does it smell like feet?' 'Because a hundred men slept here last night.' 'Well why would we do that?' 'It's our commitment.' 'Well why in the world would we commit ourselves to such a thing?' 'It's what Jesus would do.' We went on like this for some time. Finally I asked the crowd, 'What's the church smell like now?' 'And a tiny woman stood up, and she took in the whole congregation in her view, and she said, 'It smells like roses.' And another man stood up, and he shook his fist and said, 'It smells like our commitment.' The homeless men were the temple of God."

Something moved those Jesuits and that little community to see that the compassion they showed the least welcomed was but a continuing of the compassion shown to them.

Christ in our lives helps others live Christ in theirs

Comforting the suffering anywhere is comforting the suffering everywhere. The compassion I desire for myself is the compassion I desire for others. Living Christ means offering the stranger a smile, working for a safer living environment, welcoming the stranger, supporting families who are poor. Living this way isn't just a nice thing to do, it is essential for our survival.

May our trusting God help those suffering in Florida trust God in their lives.

May our hope in God help those suffering in our country hope in God in their lives

May our experience of the love of God in our lives help those who are suffering throughout
the world experience the love of God in their lives

**Good and upright is the Lord.
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Let us get on with this as if our lives depended on it