

March 22, 2015

5th Sunday in Lent B

**I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour?
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. (Gospel)**

A blessing is the giving of one's life to enable another to have more life

The Blessing

I read this week a commentary on today's Gospel by Fr. Ron Rolheiser titled, "*Blessing as dying to give life.*" I would like to share with you some of what he wrote.

"We all live with constricted hearts. There is a tightness, an unfreedom, a timidity, a tangle of constrictions, inside of each of us that blocks warmth and intimacy. We try things to get at it, to dissolve it, to free ourselves up.

"Thus it is no accident that we are so obsessed with therapy, with sex, with achievement, with intellectual and artistic pursuit, and with quick solace in religion. We are trying to free up our hearts. Sadly, for the most part, we are not succeeding all that well. Why? Because the heart is not set free by the intellect, the groin, nor even the hands. It is set free through blessing. Blessing de-constricts the heart.

"To bless someone is, first of all, to see them, to genuinely see them, to look at them so that they sense that they are truly being recognized and given adequate reality to. To bless someone is to take delight in them, to give them the gaze of admiration, to look at them in a way that says: '*You are my beloved child, in you I take delight!*'

"To bless, secondly, is to give one's life to another so as to enable them to have more life. To really bless someone is, in some way, to die for them. To bless someone deeply is to die for them in some way, to really die, to give up some real life for them.

"Good parents, good mothers and good fathers do that for their children. In all kinds of ways, they sacrifice their lives for their children. They die that their children might live. Good teachers do that for their students, good mentors do that for their proteges, good priests do that for their parishioners, good doctors and nurses do that for their patients, good politicians do that for their countries, and any good elder who truly blesses the young does that for them."

Jesus prayed: "*I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour. But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.*" Jesus was blessing us by giving his life to enable us to have more life.

**I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour?
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.
Blessing in the Middle East**

A blessing is the giving of one's life to enable another to have more life

There is an article in the current issue of Sojourners Magazine by Maria J. Stephan, a senior policy fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace. She titled it, "*Resisting ISIS. Surprisingly, acts of civil resistance in Syria and Iraq show a success against the so-called Islamic state.*" This is some of what she points out.

"In July 2013 in Raqqa, a Muslim school teacher named Soaad Nofal marched daily to ISIS headquarters. She carried a cardboard sign with messages challenging the behaviors of members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria un-Islamic after the kidnapping of the non-violent activists. After Noval was joined by hundreds of other protesters, a small number of activists were released.

"In a town in Aleppo, the business community closed their shops in a general strike against Isis in May 2014. ISIS sent its militants to reopen the shops, and the villagers remained defiant, albeit only for a short time.

"Throughout Syria, local committees are publishing information about crimes committed by ISIS. Acts of defiance targeting ISIS are spreading in Iraq as well. In Mosul, a city overrun last summer, acts of civil disobedience are expanding. In July 2014, after a prominent imam and 33 followers refused to pledge their allegiance to the ISIS leader, a large number of Iraqi supporters flocked to mosques where they preached to show solidarity for these leaders act of defiance. ISIS detained some of the leaders, but has not killed those with such a significant following.

"When ISIS came in July 2014 to explode a minaret in Mosul, residents living nearby formed a human chain to protect it. They warned the fighters that they would need to kill them if they wanted to blow up the mosque. The militants backed down and left.

"Videos by Syrians, Iraqis, and others in the Arab world dramatizing the tyranny of ISIS have gone viral on social media and have been shown on satellite television stations."

Jesus prayed: "*I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour. But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.*" There are people in Iraq and Syria who seek to bless others by enabling them to have more life.

A blessing is the giving of one's life to enable another to have more life

**I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour.
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour?**

A blessing is the giving of one's life to enable another to have more life:

† as Christ on the Cross does as he looks down at us and says: *"Let me die! Let them live!"*

† as Christ on the Cross does who after a long, hard night gets up and does what needs to be done for the children

† as Christ on the Cross does who looks at politicians with forgiveness at what they do and not in judgment at who they are

† as Christ on the Cross does who is Soaad Nofal who marched daily to the ISIS headquarters carrying a cardboard sign challenging their kidnapping of non-violent activists

† as Christ on the Cross does who is Kayla Mueller killed by Islamic extremists while trying to help the suffering people in Iraq and Syria

**I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? Father, save me from this hour.
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour?**

These are our words now:

† whenever we choose life in Christ over punishment by death

† whenever we seek God in suffering over escaping suffering

† whenever we seek hope in the unknown over fear of the known

Blessings de-constrict the heart, for when we offer the blessing of our deaths to enable others to have more life:

**We are no longer troubled now, and we can say:
Father, do not save us from this hour?
It is for your purpose that we come to this hour.**