

Bringing to Life - Body of Christ

Within a week I was part of several conversations about ministry and the topic of frustration came up. And the frustration we talked of does not necessarily apply to only Catholic ministry; I think it applies to any occupation, profession, career in which we try to help people learn/grow. Here is the frustration: we try and try and try, we place a lot of effort into trying to help people experience God and faith on a deeper level, so that their lives can be changed for the better, and it does not seem to work. I can preach the most outstanding, Spirit filled homily and people love it; yet I can read their facebook posts, listen to them in parking lots, and clearly no connection was made. Why bother?

I can imagine teachers, professors, counselors, doctors, trainers all trying to do the same... and seeing nothing different in the people.

We are created for life and to have life in the full. Jesus says this, in John 10.

The capacity to engage in life follows the revelations of Jesus Christ. Life is lived to the full when we engage in forgiveness, humility, compassion, mercy, generosity; when we turn away from our bitterness, our need to be in control, our self-centeredness, our greed.

We believe that death is when/where there is no life. We tend to associate this with an organic - biologic process; the brain activity ceases, the heart stops pumping, our system shuts down. And the soul leaves the body. All usually the result of a trauma, a sickness, of advanced old age.

Yet, there is death in which we still walk around, a living dead; not zombies, but persons who have shut down mentally and emotionally. We have stopped loving, caring, stopped making an effort. There is no fullness of life; only a shadow.

Jesus was physically dead. He died on a cross, tortured and killed by humanity for revealing the true way to be alive. He was in the tomb, dead. The Father spoke into him his name, the Spirit and Jesus was raised. We celebrate this as Christians and we believe this.

What this resurrection means is that there is no such as true death. God will speak into us the Spirit and will bring us to life. Even in the most dead of dead, God's love is more powerful.

Jesus was raised and lived! His community, the community of believers were filled with the same Spirit and they went forth to share this good news. They revealed Jesus, the preached and the lived the Good News!

Jesus in the Gospel today goes to two persons who have experienced death. A young lady experiencing physical death; a woman enduring emotional and spiritual death. Yet in each, there is faith. The faith of the parents and of the woman who reach out to Jesus, and life is given.

We are the body of Christ. We are the living Body of Christ, now, today, here. We are called to be alive! To live life in the full! And to be the source of life for those in need. People will reach out to us to be touched, to find life!

In one of the conversations I recently had, we spoke of the frustrations. Yet my friend spoke of one young lady who reached out some time after and related how she was touched by ministry done. A young lady who was harming herself and allowing herself to be harmed. She found strength through a ministry of this parish; found the strength and hope, and has become alive.

Thousands of people I have been minister to in the 22 years I have served Jesus Christ. I get reminders every now and then of persons who have been touched; seen the light in their eyes after darkness; watched the change their lives around. It's amazing.

It is done through touching people with love, with compassion, with respect, with humility. Exactly as Jesus did; as Jesus will do in us.

This parish, this church has so much potential for bringing life; and some are actively bringing that life into the world. People giving of themselves at Catholic Charities. People in the parish who have become foster families, adopted children. People working to make fundamental changes in society

to treat others with respect. People reaching out to those whom have been hurt and asking for forgiveness, likewise giving forgiveness.

And there will be times when as people of the parish or as church we too will get frustrated. It will seem as if our efforts have little or no effect.

Don't give up. Have Faith.

We do God's work, on God's time. This is not about our egos, or our desires, or our timelines. We help the seeds that God planted to grow.

And we will see people coming to life, in different ways, maybe in a time frame that is not measured in a moment, but in months, years and more. Life will happen.

Life happens through the Christian way of living. We signify this in our Eucharist, in which the bread and wine become the living person of Jesus Christ.

Because death has no power over love.

Because life prevails.