

Sunday, June 5, 2016

## A Foundation of Faith, Hope, and Love

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/060516.cfm>

1 Kings 17:17-24

Galatians 1:11-19

Luke 7:11-17

Our readings this weekend put faith on center stage. As one of the theological virtues, faith is a gift given to us by God along with hope and love. Working together with hope and love, faith puts our lives and relationships in proper order and orients us toward Truth. I recently found myself moved by a YouTube video I stumbled upon entitled: "[Young Man Battles Cancer With A Smile](#)." The young, twenty-seven-year-old father featured in the video is certainly a person who has opened himself to his relationship with God, receiving all of the blessings and gifts these virtues can bring.

This young dying father is not afraid of death and is grateful to God for the blessing to live every day in peace with an appreciation for the present moment. He remarks that he gets to spend every day with people he loves and that he is inspired to try to help people, confident that the Lord has big plans for his little baby girl. We so often see death as the enemy and allow its sting to bring us into bitterness and resentment rather than allowing death to transform us and put things into perspective. The widow in our first reading from the Book of Kings exemplifies this. Her journey with her son leads her from a place of doubt to a place of faith.

In his encyclical [Spe Salvi](#) Pope Benedict remarks that "the one who has hope lives differently." How true those words are! The young father in the video has the faith to look two seemingly opposing things square in the eye ... his impending death on one hand and his baby's smiling face on the other ... and still find peace. Underneath all that is happening to him is the foundation built of faith, hope, and love upon which he sits.

We get disappointed because we want God to fix things our way. A person without a strong faith can easily look at this young father with cancer as proof that God does not exist. After all, why would a loving God allow such a thing to happen? To many, it is inconceivable that God does not heal all ills, wipe away all tears, and correct all injustices. This "surface" approach to faith fails to see the deeper mystery that undergirds all things and the deeper truth about who we are.



There is an ironic twist to life, especially to a life of faith. When we become less concerned about ourselves, we actually find our true selves. When the center of our focus shifts from a narcissistic glance to a perspective that is “other focused,” things change and doors open. The widow from Nain in today’s Gospel never requested a healing or intervention from Jesus. Jesus entered her life and was moved with pity. The miracle that resulted was done at his request not the widow’s.

At the basis of discovering the first theological virtue, faith, is the realization and trust that God always has our best interest in mind. He knows our needs better than we do and can see the larger picture of life in a way that far exceeds ours. Once we let go of our need to cling to ourselves, we begin to see these miracles happen. We discover the right words to say in a situation where we may be at a loss; we may find ourselves crossing someone’s path and feel moved to reach out to them; a wise decision may come forth from our lips in spontaneous fashion or we may instinctively know which decision is best. These are just small ways in which we can see that we are being led to something greater just like the young father who realizes that life will soon ask that he, his wife, and his baby daughter now travel down different—though linked—paths.

It is important to truly love another human being. Unless we do so we will never escape the trap of self-focus. Yes, loving brings pain but it also brings a sense of joy and fulfillment found in no other place. Spiritual master Richard Rohr often speaks of the need to lose yourself and even speaks of parents having children as a way of outgrowing their “youthful narcissism.” The key to true happiness is locating your center outside of yourself. Our young father did precisely this. Rohr states: “The more you become yourself, the more capable you are of not overprotecting your false boundaries. After all, you really have nothing to protect. That’s the great freedom and the great happiness of truly converted people. There’s no longer a little self here to fuss over or pander to. The little self which you thought you were has passed away.”

St. Paul knew this well too. His Letter to the Galatians this weekend is a beautiful passage describing his own coming to faith. Paul could have continued to be self-focused and pursuing his selfish ambitions but he did not. His journey brought him from persecution to belief. He knew that his decision would involve living with suffering, not avoiding it. Faith, hope, and love brought him not only deeper into life’s difficulties and heartaches but into its glory as well.

Faith and confidence go hand in hand. Leaving the familiar and venturing into the unknown is always scary. Even our psalmist this weekend realizes that suffering and despair are never the end for the person of faith. “Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me; O LORD, be my helper. You changed my mourning into dancing; O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.”

Now, take a moment to look at your life. Consider your joys, your struggles, your sorrows, and your fears. Do you really believe that God has your best interest in mind and will help you achieve what is best for you? Once we realize that we are not the center of gravity and that our true center is really found outside of ourselves, then we will no longer feel compelled to pray for what we think we need or want. We will realize that prayer is about deepening a relationship with God, receiving and being surprised by God’s three special gifts of faith, hope, and love, and meeting what life brings each day. There is always life; there is no death.

*Rev. Mark S. Suslenko*

# NOTICES

## FATHER'S DAY PRAYER CARDS

Honor the many fathers and paternal figures in your parish with a prayer card from LPi featuring a vibrant image of the Christ Child and St. Joseph on the front, and a blessing for Father's Day on the reverse. Prayer cards are available in English or Spanish. [Order by June 3](#) for delivery in time for Father's Day.

## 2016 DIOCESAN INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONFERENCE, June 22-25, 2016

The 2016 DISC conference runs from Wednesday, June 22 to Saturday, June 25 and will be hosted at the JW Marriott Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

## ICSC CONFERENCE EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION

The International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is hosting its annual conference in New Orleans from October 2-5 at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. Discounted Early Bird registration is available until July 31. For more information on the conference and to register, [click here](#).

## PRAYER

O my God, I firmly believe  
that you are one God in three divine  
Persons,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
I believe that your divine Son became  
man  
and died for our sins and that he will  
come  
to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe these and all the truths  
which the Holy Catholic Church teaches  
because you have revealed them  
who are eternal truth and wisdom,  
who can neither deceive nor be de-  
ceived.  
In this faith I intend to live and die.  
Amen.

—*Act of Faith from the Compendium of the  
Catechism of the Catholic Church, © Copy-  
right 2005 Libreria Editrice Vaticana.*

**To learn more about LPi's services and publications designed to help you build a vibrant parish please visit our website: [www.4LPi.com](http://www.4LPi.com)**

Liturgical Publications Inc  
2875 S. James Drive • New Berlin, WI 53151  
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

Send email address changes to: [lpiconnections@4LPi.com](mailto:lpiconnections@4LPi.com)

*To opt out of receiving this midweek reflection as part of your Connect!  
subscription, contact: [lpiconnections@4LPi.com](mailto:lpiconnections@4LPi.com)*

Copyright ©2015, Liturgical Publications Inc. All rights reserved.