

Happy 4th of July weekend to all of you. As Christians AND as Americans we certainly have a lot to be thankful for don't we!

Looking back to the formation of this wonderful country we live in, we are reminded of the faith of our forefathers and foremothers.

Their willingness to put our young country into Gods hands was pretty remarkable wasn't it? IN GOD WE TRUST!

And as a country our trust in God has certainly served us well. And it is so important for us to continue to be focused as a country on our faith in God.

God humbly wants to be welcomed into our lives. We hear this invitation in the words of Jesus again today in the Gospel reading.

BUT! As human beings it can be very difficult to put our trust to Jesus and not to ourselves.

Can we offer up trust without cost?

In fact, there is a cost, the cost may come from the place we have trusted and pledged our loyalty.....ourselves. But it is through this cost, this expense that we find a richer spiritual life in Christ.

As a Christian and an American I have been a bit troubled by some things I have experienced lately.

While in a restaurant last week having lunch with an old friend, we were discussing the state of morality within our country.

A woman, a complete stranger, walked up to our table and rudely butted in and stated that she had been overseas lately.

While away, she refused to speak english, but spoke fluent spanish, as she didn't want anyone to know she was American. She stated she is ashamed of our country.

She said that the US Embassy was bombed shortly after she returned to the states. Her only regret was that she wasn't there to witness the bombing, and it was a shame there were no human lives lost, as it was her hope that all the politicians in Washington would have been there and died.

I was shocked and at a loss for words. Her aggressive behavior mirrored the aggression present in the bombing. My friend, a patriot and a veteran, and no shrinking violet, took her statement as a personal affront against himself and the United States of America.

Full of anger, he lit right into her and told her if she was so ashamed of this country, to get out . Get out now! I tried to remain calm as I was watched anger meet anger head on.

This womans actions put a real damper on our lunch, and left me in a bit of a funk for a while.

The following Sunday, after the 7:30 mass here, I stuck around to have breakfast with our 3 priests and Deacon Steve.

After breakfast I walked over to the entrance of our church and greeted people as they came in. This is one of my favorite things to do.

It was the beginning of a grace filled Sunday.

Upon leaving church I drove to Target's for a purchase. As I was backing out of my spot I heard a man hollering Hey! Hey!

I hit my breaks and looked out my driver's side window. There stood an enraged man with his face in my window.

He was cussing at me and using the Lords name in vain, repeatedly screaming and swearing that I had almost hit him.

Now, As I watched him, I tried to remain calm. I told him that I never saw him. And I added that I was sorry that I didn't see him and sorry that I almost hit him.

He kept screaming and swearing saying I almost hit him. Finally I said, yes, I get the point. You made your point. I did not hit you. So lets move on.

Then he called me a filthy name. And that did it. Something inside me snapped.

I got out of my car and said. What did you call me? He didn't respond, but began to walk away. I repeated, what did you call me? He continued to walk away and at about 15 yards away from me he turned to face me saying into his cell phone (I might ass that his cell phone was to his ear throught this entire experience) that he was going to hang up and call the police. I sat down in my car, let out a deep breath, and drove way.

WHAT IN THE HECK IS GOING ON?

I was trying to make sense out of what just happened, and what could have happened if he turned around to face me. I am still wrestling with that one.

You know, I don't think it was the name calling that made me snap. I think my apologies and passive behavior weren't sitting well inside me.

I was choking on a piece of humble pie. More reflection and prayer over this incident has shown me that it wasn't really his behavior that got to me, it was my reaction to his behavior, and the turmoil swirling within me.

You see, I try to live my life according to the Gospel. Heck, I preach the Gospel, Asking you to live your lives accordingly!

**And here I am with this feeling inside of me, actually
Calling on me to answer this man's aggression with aggression.**

If my wife was with me she would have said, settle down St. Francis and take it easy! AH yes, she has that wonderful way about her. But how do we answer anger with Love?

You see, as Jesus said in today's Gospel, "for I am meek and humble of heart"

Meekness seems like such a useless and impossible virtue at times in our modern world, what with all of the dangerous weapons and acts of aggression towards one another.

But the gospel today invites us to try to practice meekness , yes practice because we never will get it perfect, by: disarming our own hearts, not returning anger with anger.

As we heard in Zechariah today: How are we to banish the chariot, the war horse, the warrior inside us and seek out a peaceful way to live in the world?

My friend in the restaurant returned anger with anger. I eventually did the same.

Anger creates burden.

As Christians, we must take the burdens of our daily lives, and you know what Jesus asks us to do. Bring them to him. How do we do that?

I have learned that it is through the struggle and the turmoil to live the Gospel that we realize the struggle and turmoil is holy.

Without the struggle and the turmoil how would we meet our Jesus that asks us to come to him to share our burden ? How would we find the Lords Grace without our humanness?

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

**Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”**

**Every one of us comes here today carrying our own burden.
Illness, money worries, family issues and so on.**

It is my prayer for you, as you come forward to receive the body of Christ today, share your burdens with him, and be filled with his grace his love.

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