

Heart Surgery

"Tomorrow morning," the surgeon began, "I'll open up your Heart..."

"You'll find Jesus there," The boy interrupted. The surgeon looked up, annoyed.

"I'll cut your heart open," he continued, to see how much damage has been done..."

The surgeon looked to the parents, who sat quietly. "When I see how much damage has been done, I'll sew your heart and chest back up, and I'll plan what to do next."

"But, you'll find Jesus in my heart. The Bible says He lives there. You'll find Him in my heart."

The surgeon had had enough. "I'll tell you what I'll find in your Heart. I will find damaged muscle, low blood supply, and weakened vessels. And I'll find out if I can make you well."

"You'll find Jesus there too. He lives there." The surgeon left.

The surgeon sat in his office, recording his notes from the surgery, "...damaged aorta, damaged pulmonary vein, and widespread muscle degeneration. No hope for transplant, no hope for cure. Therapy: Painkillers and bed rest. Prognosis: Here he paused, "death within one year." He stopped the recorder, but there was more to be said. "Why?" he asked aloud. "Why did you do this? You put him here; you put him in this pain; and you cursed him to an early death. Why?" The Lord answered and said, "The boy, my lamb, was not meant for your flock for long, for he is a part of my flock, and will forever be. Here, in my flock, he will feel no pain, and will be comforted as you cannot imagine. His parents will one day join him here, and they will know peace, and my flock will continue to grow." The surgeon's tears were hot, but his anger was hotter. "You created that boy, and you created that heart. He will be dead in a few months. Why?" The Lord answered, "The boy, my lamb, shall return to my flock, for he has done his duty: I did not put my lamb with your flock to lose him, but to retrieve another lost lamb." The surgeon wept... The surgeon sat beside the boy's bed; the boy's parents sat across from him. The boy awoke and whispered; "Did you cut open my heart?" "Yes," said the surgeon. "What did you find?" asked the boy. "I found Jesus there," said the surgeon.

Author—Unknown

I like this story. I like it especially because our son Michael sent it to me, and that tells me that he gets it. God did not give us life just to have us wander through the world without purpose; He gave meaning to our life by giving us a mission. He calls us to witness our faith to others. Showing others Jesus in our hearts will help them to find Jesus in their heart as well. Who knows, maybe Michael will be a deacon one day. It could happen!

In Luke chapter nine, Jesus explained the cost of discipleship:

"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me". We are the body of Christ, and if we choose to follow Jesus, we must become a Lamb of God as well.

Our suffering is not something with which we are cursed; rather, it is the way of the cross—that will lead to our salvation. Our cross is not to be avoided, but carried in a way that gives glory to God. We are a lamb that will be sacrificed, not in vain, but as the Gospel of Luke says today, we will suffer, and "It will lead to your giving testimony".

Therefore, with Saint Paul, we can say, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us". (Romans 5: 3-5)

Our God, who is perfect love, will not allow us to suffer without reason. He will make good out of the most terrible circumstance. When we unite our sufferings with those of Jesus, we give divine testimony to our faith, and God will make our suffering effective for His purpose.

God's purpose is often beyond our understanding, but sometimes we can see that our testimony has made all the difference in the life of another. As many of you know, the RCIA process has changed many lives in this parish including mine. I believe the hand of God can be seen clearly in the growth in faith of its candidates, sponsors and team members.

Today we celebrate Right of Acceptance and Welcome for those who are seeking to join the Catholic Church. Many of the candidates have been meeting with the RCIA team all summer, and some have joined us just recently. They have been drawn to this parish by the testimony of others.

As preparation for this Rite of Acceptance, I interviewed several of the candidates. One of the questions that I asked of the candidates was "What draws you to become a part of this parish community?" Their answers testify to their growth in faith.

One candidate was drawn to our parish by the example of a special uncle.

One was drawn by love for her newborn daughter, and her hopes to give her a life of faith in the church.

One was drawn by a dear friend who testified to her faith even as she was suffering from a terminal illness.

All were all drawn to the church by the love of God through the testimony given by others.

By welcoming these candidates into the church, we are fulfilling the purpose for which we are called: to "Go therefore Baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit".

We are also fulfilling the commandment to love our neighbor as our self, as we invite them to become one with us in the Body of Christ. We are blessed to have these candidates with us today to give us the opportunity to participate in such a holy commission.

As we continue to journey with them to the Easter Sacraments, our faith too will be richer for the experience. We will see in their journey the very hand of God working through us. What an amazing adventure! Our faith will come alive even as God uses our testimony to help these candidates to grow in faith.

We are the body of Christ, and that makes us a Lamb of God as well. Today's Gospel said that we will go through many trials, and we will suffer and die. All this will happen to fulfill God's purpose—it will lead to us giving testimony for the salvation others. The Good News is that Jesus himself will give us wisdom in speaking and by our perseverance; we will secure our lives as well.

So, as we prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Christ today let us ponder these questions:

How can I testify to my faith in Jesus Christ, even in times of suffering?

Is there someone we know who is waiting for an invitation from us to join or to come back to the Church?

How can we open our heart to another so that he too can see Jesus in his heart?

Deacon Alan Christy

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