

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 12th 2017

I found this image on Google. A heart encased in stone being set free. What was the remedy?

Imagine... a human heart encased in stone is a dead heart. Yes, hearts of stone are those who let hate encase their hearts of flesh. Hearts of stone are those who let evil triumph within themselves, exhibiting behaviors that choose death, not life; bigotry, not acceptance and equality; war, not peace. The heart of our world seems to suffer from so many hardened hearts where evil seemingly wins.

Let us not lose heart! As Sam said to Mr. Frodo, in *The Lord of the Rings*, "Don't give up! There is a lot of good in this world to be struggling for."! It seems as we have made our way through the Christmas Season, let's try to remember. "We have become partners of Christ, if only we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end." From the beginning God chose to live in a loving relationship with humanity and all creation. Then, Jesus showed us the way. We can do this. We can love our world so much to transform it by being the loving people that we are. We pray for conversion of hearts so the stone encasement may crack like the stone altar in Narnia of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and we remember the stone rolled away on Easter, Jesus lives and there is LIFE renewed. In Jesus, there is healing and life. Hearts of stone become hearts of flesh.

The lepers of the Gospel found life and healing in Jesus. Imagine being ill with a terminal disease and all of a sudden one is healed. I remember my dad needing a valve replacement but was unable to have one because his valve was too big. Yes, my dad had a big heart...a loving heart of flesh, but dang, his arteries were so brittle they started to break as the physicians tried a procedure to stretch the valve. You see, my dad wanted to live...would do anything to extend his life even at the risk of losing it. He loved life. He was 92! A favorite song of his was "It's a Wonderful World". He whistled it, sang it and we all broke out in chorus singing it as we laid him to rest in the cemetery.

While my dad could not be cured, I can imagine how delighted he would have been to have met Jesus for a physical healing. No doubt he would want to tell the world!

Body, mind and spirit cry out for healing. Our interior and exterior lives were made to reflect the goodness and love of Christ. We are given a lifetime to become so. We have a sacramental life to give us strength and a means to grow in wholeness of being and in right relationship with God, self, others and creation.

There is a story of St. Francis of Assisi as he experienced his own conversion following a long recuperation from the wars of his day. He met a leper on the road. Previously he would have found such a person to be despicable and would stay distances away. But this time, he embraced the leper, kissed him and gave him his cloak. Here he met the suffering Christ of his day. Here he began his interior conversion of heart to embrace a broken world. In silence he could hear God's voice.

"If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." Imagine, being of a different race or religion and being rejected. Imagine having disease where no one person would want to be near you. Imagine just being different and not being accepted. Imagine being homeless cold and hungry. What does the voice of God say to you?

Jesus seemed overwhelmed by the people who sought him out. We may feel overwhelmed with the needs of a suffering world. The remedy....Perhaps all we can do sometimes is to find a deserted place, a bit of solitude, rest for our souls, whistle a tune, hum a song, be with Jesus, hear God's voice, and harden not our hearts!

Then go love the world! Love LIFE!

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