

14 OTB.18; Ezk 2:2-5; 2Cor 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-6, St. Peter's, BPK

Life can be difficult yes & yes? Ahhh, I believe the "Yes's" have it.

Even Jesus had a *bad day*

In the gospel the home town of Jesus is very upset by his teaching on the *Kingdom of God*, "***Where did he get all this?***" They ultimately reject his inclusive vision of liberating the poor, the prisoner, the lame, and the blind, because it **calls them** to a radical change of heart **in relationships to others**.

Shocked by their lack of faith, Jesus can do very little among them.

Jesus does not coerce. Jesus respects our decisions.

He was amazed at their lack of faith. They wanted to hate others!

We are called to give Jesus a different response aren't we?

David Heller wrote a little book titled, *Dear God: Children's Letters to God*. Inside that book are some witty observations from young "theologians":

"Dear God, What do you do with families that don't have much faith? There's a family on the next block like that. I don't want to get them in trouble, so I can't say who. See you in church. Alexis (age 10).

"Dear God, Want to hear a joke? What is red, very long, and you hear it right before you go to sleep? Give up? A sermon! Your friend, Frank (age 11).

Then there is one that is *more thoughtful* than humorous.

It goes like this: *"Dear God, I have doubts about you sometimes. Sometimes I really believe. Like when I was four and I hurt my arm and you healed it up fast. But my question is, if you could do this, why don't you stop all the bad in the world? Like war. Like diseases. Like famine. Like drugs. And there are problems in other people's neighborhoods too.*

I'll try to believe more. Ian (age 10)."

Many of us struggle with the same questions as Ian. Any thinking person does. **Paul** certainly struggled with these questions. And yet it is evident that his faith allowed him to resolve many of these issues. And it wasn't because **Paul** had not known his share of sufferingHe had (**a thorn in my side**).

But rather than destroying his faith, suffering had deepened it.

His suffering became a tool for Jesus to work miracles in his day!

Paul, was called to the prophetic mission of Jesus. And a prophet doesn't foretell the future. A prophet looks around the present & sees what could be with God's Kingdom. A prophet tells of God's presence **in** the events around them. And like Paul, we too are called to be prophets from our Baptism.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, helps us to understand what it means to live out this responsibility. Tested by his own trials & human weakness, he hears Jesus say to him:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”

Yours/my: illnesses, mistakes, weaknesses & sins can be transformed into lifesaving moments of grace for others? ...now that would take a miracle!

2 Possible? Believable? Here's an example

In January 1958, Roy Campanella's baseball career was cut short after a car crash left him a quadriplegic. The unthinkable had happened to him. This is the point at which so many people would give up on God & life, but not Campanella. After he was injured, he spent a lot of time in the *Institute of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation* in New York City. One day he stopped to read a gold plaque on one of the walls. This plaque resonated deeply with his faith. **Some of you will recognize these words:**

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.
I was made weak, that I might learn to humbly obey . . .
I asked for health that I might do great things.
I was given infirmity that I might do better things . . .

I asked for riches that I might be happy,
I was given poverty that I might be wise . . .

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others.
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God . . .

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.
I was given life that I might enjoy all things . . .”

In response to these words Roy Campanella wrote,

“I got nothing I asked for, but I received everything that I had hoped for.”

(Source: adapted/ esermons.com/Campemnella)

Roy Campanella inspired more people off the field than he ever could have on the field. This is the mistake we often make. We think it is the *perfect* athlete who makes the best spokesperson for God, the *glamorous* actor, the *polished* speaker, the *successful* business person. People want to be just like them, we reason, including appropriating their faith.

Like Paul & Roy, God can work - through us - in any situation.

Sometimes we think our witness is somehow inferior because we're not athletic, glamorous, polished or successful (the “if only I was” syndrome). Nothing could be further from the truth. **The best witness for Jesus is authentic Christian living in the face of daunting adversity.** It's when we allow God to *lead us through the rough times*, then people will see the power of God made manifest. And our own suffering and joy, joined to Jesus, have their deepest meaning & purpose.

This is how we become ... *prophets of HOPE.*

At this Liturgy of Christian Hope, “real in the flesh hope”, let us identify the *signs of the times*, pointing out where God wants us to give our utmost care & attention. And then **let** Jesus work through us to build a better world.

Live the paradox, “.... for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Amazing isn't it! (Some ideas: *Living With Christ*, July 2012)