

Suffering; a two faced consequence – Reflection17- Hilongos

The disciple, having just gone through a trail of significance said to the Master:

“My suffering is unbearable”

The Master’s response was slow but deliberate.

“The present moment is never unbearable. It is what you think is coming in the next five minutes or the next five days that drives you to despair. Stop living in the future”

PAST:

Well this set me thinking as I tend to cause myself all sorts of strife doing the opposite, which is worrying about the past and wisdom has a lot to say about people like myself who waste a lot of time on what has gone and cannot be changed. “If I had my time again I would do it differently” was my comment last week and even as I said it realised how futile such reflection can really be. I shared with Frank, as I tend to do often thanks be to God, and his reaction was predictable, “All you need to do is try to learn from the mistake not harp on it and worry yourself to distraction over it” Then Frank told me the story about his Grand Dad which had me smiling. After some 50 years milking cows he was heard to say to his Wife “I’m sick of being a farmer. If I had my time again I would be a brain surgeon” to this came the reply from Frank’s Grand Mother “You did not even make it to secondary so how can you have done that?” I guess you get the point. Now I am probably not alone when I say there are things in my past that cause me unnecessary anxiety and suffering, but I am learning to let go and forgive myself; which has to be a step in the right direction. The other thing that has helped me tremendously is to know and really believing that God is not a vengeful God but a **Loving and forgiving God**. The countless parables Jesus told spelling this out loud and clear.

PRESENT:

So where does this leave me? I know that when I was sick with Pneumonia and put in Hospital for a few days in Hilongos, I did experience some mild discomfort, but that was dissipated by the incredibly loving and devoted care I received from the two Doctors who spoilt me something terrible and certainly any suffering was countered by the many visitors, including my 1st and 2nd Year students from Saint Teresa Catholic School Hilongos, who showered me with their love and concern. All suffering, such as it was, really was not worth offering up, as I was taught to do by those mighty Brothers in Tardun Farm School so many years ago. I remember reading somewhere that Suffering of itself is neither good nor bad but what we do with it does count. I never did get a good grip on this one apart from the knowledge that pain is the body’s way of telling us all is not right with the main frame, as I like to call my body some times, and that must be a good thing surely. While in Hospital a young boy, who must have only been five or six, was brought in and immediately the Nurse started readying the boy for an intravenous drip. (I was on one myself at the time) The process of placing the needle in the back of one’s hand can be a bit of a drama. I would say fear plus a low pain

tolerance may well have contributed to this little boy's screams, which I think must have been heard in Maasin some 60 KM away. There is suffering of the body and there is suffering of the mind and both can be killers and are equally unwelcome. One thing is for sure, and it's not just the elderly who know this, we all have to go through one or the other at some time in our lives and I would venture to say most, if not all of us, have experienced both already in our lives.

FUTURE:

Jesus Suffered an awful time in those last couple of days of His life and we would like to know what that was all about? This moves us into the faith dimension which not everyone is capable or willing to go. Without faith suffering makes little or no sense at all to me. Jesus, while in the Garden of Gethsemane, suffered what our Master referred to at the beginning of this reflection. It is as if He had a window into the future and saw as clear as day what lay ahead. It was so real that it nearly killed Him there and then an Angel, no less, needed to be summoned to comfort Him. "Father let this chalice pass me by" the words of a disparate man who knows what lies ahead, I hear you say. Not so; as He remained in control the whole time. To His earlier words to His Father He added "Not My will but Thine be done" Not the words of a desperate man but one of a man who accepts what lies ahead even though He knows it won't be to His liking. He knew it was his Father's will and that made all the difference. It was the future that caused His suffering, what I call the suffering of the mind. (Mental suffering) "He sweated drops of blood" said Mathew. That anticipated pain was real suffering and His bodily suffering had not even begun. I heard a student once say "Why Why Why did they do it" Well faith tells us it was necessary "It is necessary for one man to die for the good of the people" was our High Priests comment and I would guess he was not even aware of how profound his statement to the Sanhedrin that fateful day was. Let's get back to that drama in the hospital I referred to earlier. Suffering is one thing and anticipated pain is another. Do they really mean the same thing? The boy's screams started long before the needle was placed in position. When the boy saw the needle his screams and accompanied tantrum caused him to be held down by his Dad; no less. The boy could see what was in the future, what was coming, and like Jesus, did not like it one bit and in no uncertain terms inform everyone for miles of his discomfort and disapproval.

FINAL STORY:

To tell this story I go back to the 70s in Melbourne and Br George Thornton, my dear friend and mentor, would remember this time well. After 15 happy years on the farm at Bundoora my back decided it had had enough and just went on me. So serious that at one stage I was in a wheel chair for a short time. Surgery was recommended and my first laminectomy was performed. Six months later and many complications later, including a breakdown, (I don't even want to remember that experience) the second

operation was performed and fortunately the second attempt was more successful and I was able to recover, enough to continue normal life. Of course working on the farm was out of the question, so after two years traversing backwards and forwards to Box Hill doing my teacher training, I started my teaching career which was a little more benign on the old back. Now this little preamble is to set the scene for the real story I would like to share and it brought forcefully to me more than anything else I have experienced, the Power of the Master's words at the beginning of this reflection.

While in Hospital and quite sick; a young lad visited me who I had grown very fond of and cared a lot about. He tells me he wants to leave home as Mum and Dad are not giving him the freedom he craves for. Well I advise him, as he is only 15, not to go down that path and then seeing me distressed he thanks me and takes his leave with my blessing. Br. Amon O'Brien pops in soon after and I share with him what transpired only minutes earlier and he notices my distress and calls a nurse. Now at this stage I am so worried about the future of this lad that I sense something is wrong; over and above my normal sick disposition. My body is telling me that something dramatic is about to happen so I tell the nurse "I think I am about to have a heart attack". Well; she is not amused and as she is expressing these very thoughts, WAM! Out I go and my heart really stops beating. The next thing I feel is the primordial thump delivered by the Registrar a minute or so later, as I learn latter. I really did feel I was dying. Not a pleasant feeling at all. (No lights I'm afraid) The point of this is to show I guess that anticipated pain can kill and is as real as Pain itself. So I guess we should try very hard to take the Masters advice "*Stop living in the future*" and enjoy the present moment for that is what God has given us. Now if it's not that enjoyable then we must try to make some sense of it and deal with it as positively as we can. The past is gone and the future is not ours yet and may well never be so why worry? Live in the present and thank God for each moment given for it is only ours for an instant then it is gone.

This Sunday's reading helped me a lot. Oh! How I just love reading Paul's writings as they are just packed with good stuff for everyday living. Here he is writing to the Romans 2000 years ago and it's still relevant today:

"Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are trials through which we triumph, by the power who loves us. For I am certain of this: Neither death nor life, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Let me finish with the part of the Hail Mary which spells out two important moments in all our lives and the focus on the **now**; which is not bad for a prayer we say every day:

"Pray for us now and at the Hour of our death"

Till next time: Br Peter T – Hilongos

This last page was sent to me by Kev Laws and I must say it fitted in so well with what was in my mind I must be excused for adding it here: Thanks Kevin

A Reflection

I was regretting the past and fearing the future.
Suddenly God spoke to me.

“My name is ‘I Am’.

God paused. I waited. God continued.

“When you live in the past,
with its mistakes and regrets, it is hard.
I am not there. My name is not ‘I Was’

When you live in the future,
with its problems and fears, it is hard.
I am not there. My name is not ‘I will be’

When you live in this moment,
it is not hard.
I am here.
My name is I Am”

(Author unknown)