

Art of Accompaniment.. Tuesday October 18
Grace accompanies everyone

“ The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” Evangelii Gaudium.. Pope Francis..

Checking in... What was your earliest idea .. thought about grace? How did one go about getting grace? What does it mean to be in the state of grace? How do you fall out of the state of grace? Our beliefs about grace are shaped by our attitude to the world. How do you view the world? Read the following statements and consider whether true or false. World is lost without Christ. T/F World is lost without Church.T/F Church is lost without the world. T/F .. Catholic vision of salvation.. There is God’s story.. There is my story.. and There is your story.

God surprises.. Moses gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and Moses took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.

Jo ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.

What is Grace? Is grace something like barrels of oil we can accumulate and store? Or is grace like Manna – something given by God everyday which cannot be stored up but only taken advantage of that day? Is the church supposed to be the gatekeeper deciding who gets grace and who doesn’t ? Or the dispenser – doling out grace to those she determines are deserving?

Some thoughts from Reno Guimond – chaplain at St. Michael’s. “ I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person’s life. God is in everyone’s life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else—God is in this person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.” Pope Francis

From the Tree in the Garden to Zacchaeus in the Tree

Genesis... Meant to describe the experience of innocence and innocence lost. “ They were naked and unashamed... He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’

Shame stands in the way. Shame is the first recorded human emotion in Scripture. Shame is the unbearable human emotion - guilt is more legal or conscience-based, whereas shame is more relational - disappointments and hardships declare our unworthiness, incompetence, inadequacy - “awful experience [of being] aware that we are seen as deficient and undesirable by someone whom we [had hoped would] deeply enjoy us.” the intensely painful feeling or experience that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. It is a judgement against ourselves. Our culture is occupied with who deserves honor or fame, and who deserves shame. We can fail to feel shame when we are guilty. We can even be shamed in this way for doing good – for refusing to go along. We can even

be shamed in this way for doing good – for refusing to go along. We can be made to feel ashamed when we are stripped of our dignity.

Who Experiences Shame? “ *I do not understand my own behavior.. ‘ Paul*

We are made for relationships. Addiction is a modern name and honest description for what the biblical tradition called “sin”. Our way of dealing with shame - to overcome our shame through frantically striving after perfection. diminishing someone else’s trying to cover it up, and projecting an appearance focusing instead on self-acceptance. The Incarnation means all of us struggle with being creature. It is the deep pain we feel in association with “who we are.” vulnerability and nakedness. vulnerability and nakedness. God covers that primal shame with the “garments of skin.”

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How does Christ overcome our shame and grace us?

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.

He gives us the honor that he deserves and is not ashamed to call us his sisters and brothers (Hebrews). *Voluntary* union with the shame-bearing self-emptying of Christ. The inner act of acknowledging our shame, and sitting in its presence without anger or sadness, is an act of self-emptying. When we are in such a place we pray, “O God, comfort me.” *As a sheep led to the slaughter or a blameless lamb before his shearer is mute, so He opened not His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)*

Pastoral Care Church is the community that embodies the language of God. Our greatest gift is to share the vulnerability that shame has awakened in us - our awareness of our creatureliness with those we minister to and with. Vulnerability and shame together open a place within where healing can happen. Jesus is icon of absolute vulnerability. Vulnerability is the birthplace of love. It is the source of hope empathy. The Christian life is, without exception, an agreement to share in the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of others, and to bear our own Cross through His grace. When we empty ourselves by allowing our vulnerable face to be seen.. a sort of modern day alchemy takes place. Christ fulfills what is prefigured in those sewn garments by giving us the garment of His own righteousness to cover our shame.

Grace is “the surprising, unforeseeable – even ‘unfair’ according to human criteria – mercy of One who knows me, knows my betrayals and loves me just the same, appreciates me, embraces me, calls me anew, has expectations of me. He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you, however far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel yourself growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope. Pope Francis

