Session Six Fast by Accepting Life’s challenges

I am not too strong in memorizing but I was able to memorize the opening line in Scott Peck’s best seller *The Road Less Traveled*. It really wasn’t that difficult. It is only three words-“**Life is difficult.**” Those three words have remained with me and serve as a reminder. When things are not going well for me and I feel like a victim I remember that this is life. We all have our cross to bear. So what does that have to do with fasting? As St John Bosco believed and taught you don’t have to search for mortifications, life will give you all you can handle. It is the enduring, the persevering through these challenges that become our fast. We accept them with grace and a gentle spirit.

Just the other day I had a phone conversation with our Deacon Ed. He is up in Mayo Clinic so you know that is not a good place to be. He has cancer, AML, a form of leukemia. As difficult as it was in hearing that, I was most astonished by his good sprit. There was no complaining or griping or any sign of anger. He took it in stride. He told me he would have to remain there for 7 weeks; then more testing. He was upbeat, calm and cheerful throughout the conversation. I had even commented to him that there is your lent, your battle with cancer. He chuckled.

Now our challenges don’t have to be as drastic as what Deacon Ed is enduring. For now we want to focus on the little annoyances of life. We have to crawl before we can walk. Just because they are small does not mean that they are not significant. Life is made up of the small acts, rarely the big events. This fast challenges us to accept the frustrations, annoyance of life without complaining. We accept the fact that we can’t have life our way, sorry Burger King. We do it with a cheerful spirit.

I feel sorry for Moses. He had the near impossible task of leading over a half million people through the desert. Even though they were freed from slavery they still found reasons to complain.

 “Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.” Exodus15:22-25. If I were Moses I think I would rather throw them into the water rather than the stick.

This is the fast that pleases God and makes the most sense. Listen to the wisdom of St. John Chrysostom(347-407) :“Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works…Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice. Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin. Let the eye fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful. Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip. Let the mouth fast from foul words and criticism. For what good is it if we abstain from fowl and fishes, but bite and devour one another?”

So true. So maybe this is the fast for you. Endure cheerfully the weather, traffic, people and whatever may annoy you. Let all our actions please our God.

Questions for Sharing

What gets under your skin?

What is worse stuck in traffic or stuck on line?

Life is difficult. Do you agree and if so how is this true in your life?

Why do you think that in Haiti the poorest country in the Western hemisphere there is no suicide?

What can you now decide to endure without complaining?