

12A SML 2020
MT 10:26-33

Fulton Sheen once wrote that “anxiety is supposed to be the greatest affliction short of war and pestilence that can afflict humankind.” Bishop Sheen was 23 years old during the Spanish Flu and WW I, and 46 years old when the US entered WWII, so he was well acquainted with war and pestilence.

We are well acquainted with pestilence in the current pandemic, and so our fears are validated by Bishop Sheen. They are real. Today’s “do not be afraid” gospel is so very timely. 365 times in the scriptures is the command, “Do not be afraid,” once for every day of the year.

St. John Paul II’s clarion call in his writings and speeches is “Do not be afraid.” Easier said than done.

I do not pretend to be a font of wisdom during this time of peril, but I would like to speak from the heart, from my personal experience.

Every one of us have had our “this,” or, if there is more than one “this,” our “these” in our lives, which are more than what we can handle on our own. A “this” or

“these” are the dilemmas in life for which we have one option, and if that one option does not pan out, no options, or worse yet, out of the gate, no options.

As believers, we always, always, always have one option, and that option is to bring your “this” or your “these” to Our Blessed Lord. And here’s the raw, honest prayer. “Lord, this is bigger than me but it’s not bigger than You.” Coronavirus is bigger than me, but it’s not bigger than You. Lord, if there is anything I need to do to solve this dilemma, put that thought on my mind and I will do it.

Love, love, love the example of Our Risen Lord revealing Himself to His disciples who had given up on effort after a night of fruitless, or should I say, fishless fishing. The disciples’ ‘this’ is we caught no fish. If we don’t catch fish, our families don’t eat.

Our Risen Lord came, and the nets were at their breaking point with the overabundance of supply. But notice the disciples did not find their fish ready on the shore in their nets. The disciples did not lean on their oars and drift with the tide, trusting the current.

Our Risen Lord put the thought on their mind. “Throw you nets over the right side and you will find something.” This they did. And they dragged their nets ashore. In other words, the miracle was accomplished, but not without the cooperation of the Apostles.

One more example to drive the point home. At the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, their ‘this’ is 5000 people and no food. Our Blessed Lord did not respond with His ‘that,’ namely multiplying provisions at miraculous proportions, without effort on the part of the disciples:

- ✓ Bring what you have, two fish and five barley loaves
- ✓ Have the people recline in groups of 50
- ✓ He gave the fish and bread to the disciples, who in turn, gave them to the crowd.
- ✓ Gather up the leftovers.

So, yes, prayers about their “this” were answered with “that,” but there was effort on the part of those asking for prayers to be answered.

Pastoring after Superstorm Sandy. That was a “this” for me, at the time. I had no experience recovering from a hurricane. I do now. Pastoring through the pandemic. I

have no experience, but I'm learning. On both occasions, Lord, if there is something I need to be doing, put the thought on my mind, and I will gladly do it. And as Our Lord led St. Benedict and me through every phase during and in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, so has and will Our Blessed Lord lead St. Mary of the Lakes and me through this pandemic. It's our first weekend back in Church. Woo hoo! I am sure, without a doubt that Our Lord will lead us the rest of the way. Why? Because my experience bears this out. Through every no option "this" that I have faced, Our Blessed Lord always said, "In answer to my 'this,' do 'that'!" In answer to my 'these,' do 'those'!"

On this Father's Day weekend, I recall one of many "this" that our family, like every family, had to endure, that brings my Dad front and center. And that "this" was burying my three year old nephew, his grandson. None of us had experience burying a child. None of us. But I remember my Dad saying, "We will get through this." And his words were neither shy nor shaky. His words were firm and faith filled. And he was right. Our family did get

through that very sad time. We were and are forever changed with our family intercessor, St. Geoffrey in heaven, now, along with my Mom and Dad and so many others. We got through that “this” by giving it to Our Blessed Lord.

One of St. John Paul’s “do not be afraid” quotes is a faith filled way to bring this homily to a close. “There is no cross to bear that Christ has not already born for us, and does not now bear with us.”