



The Season of Hope

HOMILY HELPS

THEME – SHARING IN A JOURNEY - ACCOMPANIMENT

As we reflect on the theme of sharing in a journey this month as a tool to better accompany those who are struggling, we draw from the treasury of the faith. Some of these brief reflections may be suitable for insertion in a homily as an encouragement to grow in the art of accompaniment in order to better walk with others in their time of need.

General Comments on Accompaniment

- In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of “accompaniment” as a dimension of evangelization:

*“In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people’s lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze. **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** (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.*

“Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom. Some people think they are free if they can avoid God; they fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere. To accompany them would be counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father.

“Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock. We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the

right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives.” (Evangelii Gaudium 169-171; read the whole section from [169-173](#))

Homily Helps for Sundays and Holy Days

October 2, 2020 – Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels

- “I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” (Mt 18:10)
- This Memorial serves as a helpful reminder of God’s providential care and accompaniment in our lives through the mission of the Holy Guardian Angels. Before we can hope to walk with others in their time of trial, we must find strength and encouragement in the knowledge of our heavenly Father’s care for us. Today’s Memorial shines a light on those unseen spiritual companions and protectors who intercede for us daily.

October 4, 2020 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- *Gospel:* The parable that Jesus shares is one of violence and trauma. But it is also a reminder that God has sent his Son into the midst of this violence and trauma to bring healing and peace.
- *Our Story:* Speak about an experience that you have had ministering to people who have experienced trauma. How did you respond to their experience? How did you accompany them? How did you remind them that Jesus walks with them in their pain and suffering?
- *Application:* Many people are uncomfortable with accompanying those whom they know have gone through a tragedy, and it is true that often professional help is needed. But that does not mean that only the trained and certified should accompany such individuals. All Christians share the call and responsibility to take up the cross of those burdened by suffering, following the example of Our Lord. Speaking of your own experience of accompanying families through tragedy can help to give confidence to parishioners to offer hope and consolation to their own family members and friends.

October 7, 2020 – Memorial of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary

- “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.” (Lk 11:1)
- When the disciples ask Jesus how to pray, he teaches them to call God “Our Father,” a prayer that also links together the various mysteries of the Holy Rosary. In the recitation of this prayer, we are challenged to trust more fully in God’s fatherly love for us – and to learn from the example of Our Lady, who readily accepted the Lord’s will: “let it be done to me according to your word.” In her reliance on the trustworthiness of God’s word, the Blessed Virgin displays to us the foundation of her charity and compassion for others. May Our Lady’s example compel us to a greater trust in God’s goodness, even in the midst of the “sorrowful mysteries” of our own lives.

October 11, 2020 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- *Gospel:* Again, Jesus tells a parable filled with conflict and violence, but we should not let these details distract us from the central image, which likens the kingdom of heaven to a royal wedding feast. This comes through even more clearly in the first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, who presents the image of “a feast of rich food and choice wines.”
- *Our Story:* The root of the word “accompany” means to share bread with another person, i.e. to share in the daily routine and struggles of another. Are there ways in which you have “accompanied” parishioners in their daily lives? Do you have a friend or family member who shows up to “break bread” together when they get the sense that you could use some extra support? Or perhaps you have a group of friends with whom you often celebrate special occasions, like your birthday or ordination anniversary. These are all examples of “accompaniment,” which can transform a simple meal into a foreshadowing of the wedding feast in heaven.
- *Application:* In the Holy Eucharist, Our Lord accompanies us through our daily lives, in the same way that he accompanied the downtrodden disciples on the road to Emmaus. Yet the Eucharist is not only a meal of consolation, but also one of celebration – a true foretaste of the heavenly wedding feast! As the Lord consoles us in the Eucharist, may we be strengthened to truly accompany others through the joys and sorrows of life.
- *Example:* In the musical *Les Miserables*, the main character, Jean Valjean, is released after many years in prison. As a convicted felon, Valjean drifts from one town to another trying to find employment, or just a place to stay. Having been rejected everywhere he went, Valjean is eventually welcomed into the humble home of an aging bishop. The simple meal offered by the bishop gives us a glimpse of what Pope Francis calls the “art of accompaniment,” and alludes to the “heavenly feast” of bread and wine. Here are the words of the bishop:

“Come in, sir, for you are weary,
And the night is cold out there.
Though our lives are very humble
What we have, we have to share.
There is wine here to revive you.
There is bread to make you strong,
There's a bed to rest till morning,
Rest from pain, and rest from wrong.”

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Season of Hope
Diocesan HOPE Task Force

