

Look For Him in the Present Moments of Life

A few years ago, the Japanese Prime Minister was given some Basic English linguistic training before he traveled to Washington to meet the president... The translator said, "Prime Minister, when you shake hands with the President please say 'how are you'". The President should then reply: "I'm fine, and you?" Then you respond: 'me too'. Afterwards the translators will do all the work" It looked quite simple, but the truth is....When the PM met the president, he mistakenly said "Who Are You?" instead of "How are you". The president was a bit shocked but still managed to react with humor: "Well, I'm the First Lady's husband, ha-ha...." Mori replied, "Me too, ha-ha."

There was a long silence in the meeting room. This faux pas by the Prime Minister was a miniscule moment compared to the anger and visceral rage in the synagogue in which Jesus sat.

The politicians moved on – not so in the synagogue; they could not get over what Jesus said. Who is this upstart, they demand? When Jesus sat down to begin his sermon he applies Isaiah's words to himself and that creates all of the problems.

Jesus isn't just proclaiming restoration; He is that restoration. He is going to complete the work that Isaiah left undone.

Twenty centuries have come and gone since that day, and the world is still a mess. We know it; we see; we live it. We wait for God to do something. Every time we see misery, wars, injustice, we say, “Someday God is going to straighten this mess out.” Blaise Pascal said: “the only time we're truly happy is when day-dreaming about future happiness.” There is much truth to this.

But in this Gospel Jesus does not call us to daydream about tomorrow, he calls us back into the present moments of our lives to look for him. He says: I am in your midst – I am your stories, the pieces of your lives. I am there in the highs and the lows. But time and time again we do not see him, just as those who actually heard him – could not see him either because they were still waiting for tomorrow, their envisioned future. I heard this story and, I think it puts this somewhat in prospective especially as we all are still stepping into the New Year. It is written from the perspective of an older person looking back embraced by the richness and wisdom of age. Her emphasis is on the “now” of life.

“Old age, I decided, is a gift. I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be. Oh, not my body! I sometimes despair over that ... the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the

sagging butt. And often I am taken aback by that old person that lives in my mirror, but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, and my loving family for less grey hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become kinder to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so avant-garde on my patio. Over the years, my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when a beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turn grey, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver. I can say "no", and mean it. I can say "yes", and mean it. Being old has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying

about what will be but will continue to rejoice in **what was and what is now.**

This our lesson it is what Jesus was trying to convey in the Synagogue. All that you have hoped for has come to pass in me (the Father's son), now. Look around – he exhorts; it's me. Most of us, I suggest, put our own spin on our religious beliefs, as did the Jews in that synagogue. After all - how could he be there? Where in their scripture did it say what Jesus was implying? Issues such as this one can lead into deep theological questions and arguments. Leading us to ask: Will Jesus come while we are alive; is he present somewhere in the world waiting for that perfect moment to reveal himself again? Is he sitting in a pew among you in this church? Would he be recognized by the world – or would he be killed yet again by humanity. These are questions that we can all debate until eternity beckons, but they are worth pondering.

No matter where our theological meanderings go – we must always know that Jesus has always said I am in your midst, and he could not be more fully present than in this Eucharist which brings us all together. Has Jesus implored then he implores now. He says: “Let me take care of today, and you will not have to worry about your tomorrows – ever.”