

THE PARABLE OF THE WALK IN THE FOG

Have you heard of the PARABLE OF THE WALK IN THE FOG? At the end of my last weeks' column, "TIME TO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF HOPE", I told the story of my walking every morning on the jetty leading to Salem's Harbor. Let me summarize this story; *"About 11 years ago, I was assigned as seminarian at Immaculate Conception Parish in Salem, right next to the harbor. Every morning, I enjoyed praying while walking on the long, narrow jetty leading to a lighthouse. One morning, despite a THICK FOG, I still chose to walk to the lighthouse. I could not see further than three feet ahead. I could not see the lighthouse at all, but walking very slowly, I finally reached it."*

To draw some lessons, let us see this story as a PARABLE so that we can all use our imagination:

FIRST, imagine that the LIGHTHOUSE is the HOUSE OF JESUS, a reminder that JESUS is our LIGHT. He himself proclaims: "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD". A lighthouse is built so as to guide ships caught in major storms. It helps them to find a secure and peaceful harbor away from the high winds and huge waves.

SECOND, imagine that the JETTY is THE NARROW WAY TO HEAVEN. On each side of the jetty are the dangerous waves where we can drown. When we keep walking and finally arrive at the end of the jetty, this is our encounter with Jesus before entering Heaven.

THIRD, imagine that the FOG is the WORLD AROUND US, the world of temptations and sinfulness, which makes us SPIRITUALLY BLIND to the Reality of God.

Using the above spiritual meanings of lighthouse, jetty and fog, we can draw three broad categories of LESSONS for our ADVENT JOURNEY:

1. HAVE FAITH ...and then HOPE! One practical reason why I decided despite the thick FOG to walk toward the LIGHTHOUSE, the House of God, is that I knew that the LIGHTHOUSE was there. I had seen it before and though the FOG kept it hidden, I was confident; I believed that it was there and that I could reach it. We know that FAITH is the foundation, the ROCK of our Christian Life. While FAITH is a Gift from God, it can be lost in the "FOG" of our lives and such loss of Faith leads to spiritual paralysis. We also know from experience that FAITH LEADS TO HOPE. We believe that Heaven exists. Such Faith leads us to HOPE that one day we can reach Heaven (though we have no certitude).

2. HOPE ...and PERSEVERE! We all BELIEVE that Heaven (the House of God, the Lighthouse) exists. We all HOPE that we will be among those God chooses to be

with HIM forever and ever (able to reach the LIGHTHOUSE). However, this does not prevent us from losing HOPE. When faced with the temptations of the world ( SURROUNDED BY FOG) , we may not be able to resist them and then have to pay the consequences of our sinful actions such as suffering , envy, anger , or major addiction (alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, gluttony). HOPE is not sufficient. We need to keep FAITH that God always LOVES US and that HE is the only one who can help us. We need to PERSEVERE. We need to keep the DESIRE TO CHANGE, to TURN TOWARD GOD, to CONVERT!

3. WALK SLOWLY , PRAY, KEEP your EYES ON JESUS, and you can see HIS LIGHT through the FOG of your lives. Know your personal limitations and weaknesses. Make a daily EXAMEN as recommended by St. Ignatius of Loyola. PRAY so as to make the right choices, the right decisions following the movements of the HOLY SPIRIT in your heart, instead of following your own will and selfish interests. Read the Scriptures! Meditate in silence. Slow down! Despite the slow walk, you may still fall down (I could have fallen off the jetty into the rocks and strong waves). Recognize your errors and sins. GO to CONFESSION. RECONCILE WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS HURT YOU!

Depending on your own experience and on where you are today in your life (peace, joy, love or challenges, disappointments, loneliness, hopelessness, loss of purpose, depression, physical illness, family disputes, loss of a loved one), you may draw specific, personal lessons, for your own Advent Journey. It does not have to be many lessons: a single one may help you TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE. ADVENT is a TIME TO CHANGE, A TIME TO TURN TOWARD GOD, A TIME TO BECOME A MORE RADICAL AND INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE OF CHRIST! Jesus says to each one of us: "WAKE UP, GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE, SACRIFICE YOUR TIME FOR OTHERS, FOLLOW ME EVERY DAY!

As we light the THIRD CANDLE, THE ROSE ONE of the Advent Wreath, we are reminded that today is GAUDETE SUNDAY. GAUDETE in Latin means simply: REJOICE! Let us all REJOICE in our LORD JESUS CHRIST! JESUS IS OUR JOY! COME LORD JESUS! COME!



One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain