

Signs of Hope

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

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Fr. Tony Davis

Many people these days are feeling broken. Whether it is due to concerns over the amount of violence in our city, the ongoing effects of being isolated due to the pandemic, the challenges of living in a politically divided country, navigating the instability of our careers or families, or just dealing with life in general, this is not what we thought life would be. This is not what we signed up for.

The words of Job in our First Reading today probably resonate with many of us. Job speaks very honestly and rhetorically asks, “is not man’s life on earth a drudgery?” He continues by referencing ‘months of misery,’ ‘troubled nights,’ and ‘restlessness until the dawn.’ At the end of the reading, Job summarizes by saying, “I shall not see happiness again.” Because we know this feeling ourselves, many of us would be hesitant to claim he is exaggerating.

One of our temptations during times of feeling broken is to give up hope. We convince ourselves that we shall not see happiness again. When this happens, we resign ourselves from reality and join the masses of humanity in one great collective depression. We say, ‘things will never change. What’s the point of even trying?’

As a human, I am sure Jesus had days when he felt broken. In today’s Gospel, Jesus, being surrounded by so many sick and possessed people, could have easily been overwhelmed and given up hope. He could have closed his door. Instead, even late into the evening, he let

people in and healed them. He became a sign of hope to all those in Galilee.

Our Psalm this weekend says, “praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.” If we believe this to be true, then our calling is to be signs of hope for the world. Unfortunately, there are many times when we are not that. In some cases, we actually make matters worse by judging the world harshly, having nothing good to say about others, predicting disaster, waiting for others to initiate goodwill, and using violence to get our way. Being hope for the world is something totally different. It means taking the conversation in a different direction, calling attention to the good we see in others, being motivated to rise above our divisions, encouraging those who are struggling, seeing all life as a gift, and reminding people that God still loves the human race. The world would be so much better off if Christians would take the lead on this message of hope.

As Christians, we should take our call to be signs of hope more seriously.

Questions: Am I a sign of hope? Do I let my unhappiness drag other people down? How easily do I give into despair? How has God healed me?

As we reflect upon these sorts of questions, I want to end with the beautiful and empowering words of the poet, Amanda Gorman, who spoke at the presidential inauguration a few weeks ago: “for there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.”