

2nd Sunday- A 2017
Deacon Pat Hall

ISAIAH 49:3, 5-6, 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-3, JOHN 1:29-34

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/011517.cfm>

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Castor Oil... what does that make you think of?

OK, how about something closer to the 21st Century. How about Tylenol or Amoxiciline?

For me, I think of them as remedies for some ailment. I don't think much about the remedies, I'm most concerned about the ailment and being free from that ailment. I want to live.

Most of the animal kingdom has the instinct for survival. As far as I know, though, the human being is the only one who knows that he will die. I don't want to die now and I'm not too keen on the idea of dying later.

In the course of my service in blue as an officer or in black as your deacon, I have been called to many scenes where people are fighting for life. Some of their struggles have become so dark, that they become afraid of life if it were to continue the unbearable pain they have.

I saw that play out in terrible form once. It could have ended tragically, but it ended well.

You may have heard the phrase "suicide by cop". This is the strategy in which one acts out in a threatening way to compel the responding police to shoot them. Of course the responding cops don't know what is going on in the threatening person's head.

One night a despondent husband made his wife a hostage at gunpoint. He pretended to not notice her calling 911 and he waited for the arriving police, me and my partner. I covered the front door, my partner the back. I hid by the front porch with my ear to the living room window letting time work for de-escalation. After a couple of minutes, a shot rang out from inside. I rushed up the porch steps to

enter the house, but was met by the husband busting out through the front door with hands up screaming “Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!” Well, I didn’t.

Here this guy had planned for us to respond and shoot him. When we didn’t rush in, he thought he’d speed up the process by shooting into the ceiling. Well, that almost worked except that when he shot into the ceiling, his sense of survival kicked in, “Hey, those cops are going to kill me!” and so he rushed out the door screaming not to be shot.

We were made and designed to live. We Christians understand that is for eternal life. And yet, in the busy-ness of life, sometimes we only live a shadow of life. We don’t live the life we were created for. When we are selfish, we become small. When we are fearful, we become faint specters of who we could be.

We were made for eternity. We were made for fullness of life in the here and now.

It has been said, that one is not truly alive until one discovers what is worth dying for.

Jesus knew what was worth dying for: you!

Parents know that kind of love worth living; what parent would not die for their child.

We hold priests in that special honor, because they sacrifice themselves for us. That’s how come I call that young guy, Father.

Today we hear the testimony of John the Baptist... the Baptist because he offered a remedy to turn from sin... acted out in being immersed in water. John testifies to the one who is greater than him, who existed before him and who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Jesus immerses us into the very spirit of God.

This sin is not just our individual transgressions of our selfishness at the expense of others. It is the separateness we have created between us and our creator.ⁱ

We were made to be in eternal relationship with our Father. Our sin, is the source of death on earth... and our eternal fate without Jesus’

immersion in the Spirit.

Immersed in the life of God, we come to live fully and bravely in this valley of tears. We come together in mutual support and love with common praise for our God. We come to his table, to live in Him, to be one in Him... now and forever.

In our liturgy today, our prayer after Communion frames this so well:

*Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
and in your kindness
make those you have nourished by this one heavenly Bread
one in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.*

The ailment: sin and death

The remedy: baptism

The result: life everlasting in the life of Christ

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ⁱ John Shea, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, p. 55