

Fr Ryan Homily 10/11/20

Read: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23:1-6; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22:1-14

Are you guys tired? I'm tired from everything that's going on in 2020. It's exhausting isn't it? Some of the past weeks, for a whole host of reasons, have been some of the most trying and challenging in my life and I'm sure we could go around and everyone can share about why we're tired of everything. It's been an emotionally draining, it's spiritually challenging, we're all probably over conscious of our physical health -every cough, every sneeze, we analyze- that does a number on our minds as well. So, when we are tired and we don't have strength left, where does our strength need to come from? And you probably know what the answer is gonna be but let's get there by way of a story. I remember when I was going through CPE. CPE it means clinical pastoral education. It's something that everybody who is studying to be a priest and anybody who's studying to be protestant ministers all do. When you are in a hospital for an entire summer if not longer you work with the pastoral care office and try to visit as many patients as you can in a day. In the morning you sit with the nurses during rounds and you learn some info about the patients and then you're off. I did my summer CPE at Aurora BayCare down in Green Bay and going into everybody's hospital room you can imagine the vast array of responses that you get from people. They know you're there as part of the chaplain's office to kind of look out for their spiritual health and we have some great conversations with people, and some you're immediately and angrily thrown out of the room. And that's okay, we respect where people are at with what they're going through. Now most of my memories of that summer are a blur now but there is one patient who has always stuck with me and his name was Bruce. Bruce was a little past middle age, he was a very big man, he was a large man, and his medical chart was just a laundry list of bad things. So, I walk into his room and I was expecting to find someone depressed, maybe angry, struggling and he was just the opposite. He was joyful, he was peaceful, and he had a Bible in one hand, he had a thick southern drawl, I don't think he was Catholic, but a good Christian man and at peace. And that peace and that joy radiated from him to everybody who came in contact with him. He was gracious, the nurses loved him because he was so kind to them which you know isn't always the case in the hospital. And you leave Bruce's room and you feel like you were the one who was ministered to by him; it was an amazing thing. A man

who everything was going south for medically and yet he had this unshakeable steadiness about him, a deepness to him, that he passed onto others. I'll never forget. So, I asked him about them one day about his faith, about what he was going through that rattled so many other people and all he did was hold up his Bible and say to me what St Paul is saying to all of us today - I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. When we're tired, when we're spent, when we have nothing left in the tank - I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. I never found out what happened to Bruce, and you often don't get the end of the story when you're in a hospital working in a chaplaincy office, somebody moves on from the hospital or you move to a different wing. Did Bruce get better physically? Did he not? I don't know. But either way I say he was on solid ground and nothing could shake his relationship with Jesus. He knew Jesus deeply. And I don't think it was random that the Lord somehow brought Bruce back to my memory this week. I think I needed to be reminded of him and maybe you needed to hear about his faith as well. Here's something that you may not have known about me. When I get stressed, I eat. I eat junk food and I know it's not good, but I still do it. And so, I was going to the convenient store one afternoon to get my junk food and the lady checking me out at the cashier's register said, how are you? I said oh I'm getting by. And you know what she says to me? She looks at me and says don't you know that every day is a blessed day? And I was like, yeah, yes I do. Then I went outside, and I was just beside myself because that was the truth. That every day is a blessed day and we gotta know that. Why is every day a blessed day even when we're tired or frustrated or overwhelmed because no matter what we we're going through, I can do all things with Christ who strengthens me. That second reading. And Paul can say that. He says I've been in good, I've been in bad, I've had a lot, I've had nothing at all but you know I can do everything because it's Christ who gives me His strength, it's not my own, it comes from Him. And that's what we have to cling to because when we do that, we'll be able to get through things. We'll be able to say, even if we don't feel it if we're struggling inside, even though we wonder what the outcome is gonna be, we can be blessed because God is our strength. We gotta remember that because if not we're gonna start focusing on all these other things and not focus on Christ. I saw this great picture the other day of our Lord and it was Jesus standing in the rain, pouring around Him and underneath the caption said look at me not the storm. Look at me not at the storm. And that was Peter's problem, wasn't it,

when he could walk on the waves of the sea, could walk on water as long as his eyes were trained on Jesus. But as soon as he takes his eyes off of Jesus, he starts to look at the waves and the storm, he sinks. He gets overwhelmed and he has to call out to Jesus to save him. That's our world right now. Right? The waves are crashing, the storm is raging, the rain is falling, and Jesus says to each one of us look at me not the storm. And what does Jesus do after he saves Peter? He hauls him back into the boat, right, and that boat on the sea has always been a symbol of the church. That if we're with Jesus in that boat, let the storm rage, we're safe. We're safe. We need to look at Jesus and not at the storms in our lives and we need to know that no matter what happens. That first reading is beautiful, isn't it? Isn't the imagery beautiful in the first reading where God says Himself, I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. That's how intimate Jesus wants to be with you when you're struggling, when you're crying. Think about Jesus coming and being that close to you that He wipes the tears from your eyes. That's how intimate Jesus wants to be with you and me. He's not only wanting to give us His strength but when life is overpowering to us, that He Himself is going to wipe away our tears. It's an amazing thing. And that needs to be what gives us hope. Friends, we all see the trouble that's going on in the world right now. But let me tell you, the night before Jesus died, as He was sitting at the Last Supper with His disciples, He looked at them and told them in this world you will have trouble but have no fear because I've overcome the world. And we know Jesus is victorious at the end. And this afternoon, the one who is so intimate with us that He wipes the tears from our eyes, says in this world you're gonna have trouble but have no fear, I've overcome the world. So, let us keep our eyes focused on Jesus, not on the storm, let us trust Him that no matter what we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.

Amen