

Corpus Christi Parish  
PHONE: (250) 765-6869  
E-mail: corpuschristikelowna@shaw.ca  
www.corpuschristikelowna.com  
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Dear Parishioners;

Just this very morning I read this quote; “There’s a great power in words, if you don’t hitch too many of them together.” Too bad for you I didn’t find this a few weeks ago.

So my question for this week is; Who of us could use a hair cut? I was part of a zoom meeting this past week for the School Board and some people were on the phone and most people you could see sitting in their office or homes. And you can see yourself as well. And all I kept thinking was that I am facing a real dilemma. Will I cut my own hair? Or will I let it grow out and wear it in a ponytail and a headband like I use to many, many years ago? Only time will tell.

And I was wondering how many of you have decided that you don’t actually look so bad with gray hair? This could be a real money saver for some of us. Of course, there are some of us who have been saving money on hair cuts for many years now and are no doubt feeling a little superior. It must be a nice change of pace. All is not dark.

Here is a “Covid-19 bad news/good news story” that you probably aren’t going to hear about on the news. The bad news is that this year I had to bake my own birthday cake. And the good news is that thanks to Betty Crocker, my new best friend, I can now bake myself a cake any time that I want. And I have. It’s a white cake with brown sugar and coconut glazed icing. So if when you see me the next time, you start to think that there may be more of me than there was before, go ahead and keep it to yourself.

So, May 1<sup>st</sup> is the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. We hear a lot about workers these days. Those who are working on the front lines as first responders and those who are working to keep us fed. And then there are those who would love to work but who are restricted from doing so. And talking of hair cuts, there are those small business owners who may not have a job to return to.

I think that St. Joseph is the perfect example for us during these trying times. There was Joseph, minding his own business, overjoyed

to be able to have a future with Mary, the woman he loved. And then she comes up pregnant and Joseph isn't the father. His world got turned upside down for no fault of his own, and he was left with a painful heart and an uncertain future. Sound familiar?

We don't know how long it was between when Joseph was told about Mary being pregnant and Joseph's visit by an Angel in a dream. And I don't think that we do ourselves any favours by assuming that these events took place over just a day or two.

Remember that God has a plan for everyone, we just don't always know what that plan is. But most plans, like most of the important lessons of life, take time to develop. What we do know is that Joseph was so hurt that he was thinking of dismissing Mary. Talk about having your plans and life disrupted.

We often hear mentioned in the Gospels that Jesus had sisters and brothers. And there is the most famous one when Jesus had just started what they call His Public Ministry and He has gone back home.

It is human nature for us to not like a know-it-all and it can be challenging for us to rejoice at the good fortunes of others. So it was no surprise that Jesus' family, who knew Him back when, found it difficult to celebrate even His ability to perform miracles. And someone sniped;

“Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? And they took offense at him.” (Matt 13:54-56)

We often explain these passages by saying that what they really meant was that these were Jesus' cousins. But it is also possible that Joseph had a first wife who had died and that they were Jesus' step sisters and brothers. Just as it was the custom for a woman to be married at a young age, it was also the custom that a man had to be of a certain ability and stability in order to afford having a family.

In either case, Joseph went from having a real sense of belonging and a new purpose to his life, to having it all taken away from him, and again, for no fault of his own.

Have you ever wondered why Joseph is visited by the Angel in a dream when Mary was visited by the same Angel in person? It wasn't

a sign of status. It wasn't because Mary was higher up on the pecking order than Joseph. It was because of God's design.

God could have spoken to Joseph from a burning bush or made his life miserable like with the Prophet Jonah (you should read the story about Jonah. It is short and it is a story about how God gets His way no matter what we do to try and avoid it. You'll find Jonah between the Prophets Obadiah and Micah right before the New Testament.)

Rather than forcing Joseph to do what he did not want to do, which was to take Mary as his wife, God allows for a little light for Joseph with the invitation from the Angel. But because it happened in a dream, Joseph's only recourse, if he would be healed and love again, was to go and talk with Mary directly. And that was no fluke. God knows what God is doing, even and especially when it feels as if we are walking through the darkest valleys.

Joseph would have gone and spoken with Mary, because he would have remembered that as Mary had tried to explain herself, she had mentioned the Angel.

I think that it is important for us to give Joseph his due. We have all been hurt over our life times, and we haven't always been that eager to be healed. Sometimes we want to stay in our hurt and feel sorry for ourselves. And when we do, we should expect the Holy Spirit to try to move us to healing and new life too.

So Joseph, confused, goes and sees Mary. And he starts by saying; "Mary, I had a visit by an Angel in a dream". And can you imagine Mary's relief. (Take a moment and try to imagine Mary's relief because that is why she is so important to us. Mary prays for us out of her own experiences of the cross.) And Mary would ask; "And did the Angel look like this?" And Joseph would have said; "Yes!" And Mary would ask; "And did the Angel sound like this and use these words?"

God arranged the events of their lives so that they could help to heal each other, so that they could choose to love again and grow as a couple. God didn't just want duty or obedience, He wanted healing and fulfillment for Mary and Joseph. God wants that for us too.

In these times it is easy to get discouraged ourselves, or to be overwhelmed by the trials of a lot of other people. Which is why Jesus gives us this invitation; "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." That little word "Let" is the linchpin to our

understanding of how to work with God's grace. Joseph had to not "let" his heart be broken forever, and we have to not "let" our hearts be discouraged even when the future is so uncertain.

The following is a reading from the book of Lamentations (3:17-26). The person who wrote this obviously had been going through a very difficult time in their lives, to the point that they have forgotten what happiness is. And they have come to realize that just pondering their troubles, on their own, has gotten them nowhere. In fact, their self pity has only made their problems worse. And so they turn again to the Lord and invite the Spirit to remind them what real happiness is, and they discover again their strength and their path of healing.

My soul is deprived of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;  
so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the LORD."

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness  
is wormwood and gall!  
My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.  
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.  
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,  
"therefore I will hope in him."

The LORD is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul that seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.

Through the intercession of St. Joseph, may we never doubt that God has a plan for all of us, so that we will lift up our heads and look for the signs of God's graces and blessings, and learn to be grateful in spite of our troubles.

May God be gracious to us and bless us, now and forever.

Pat Monette Pastor