

Father O'Connor's Homily for 16 June 2024  
Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time-B  
Father's Day

Ezekiel 17: 22-24  
2 Corinthians 5: 6-10  
Mark 4: 26-34

“We walk by faith, not by sight” [2 Corinthians 5: 7].

This is a line from today's second reading, from Saint Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. You and I are now walking by our faith in the Lord who is leading us, even though oftentimes we cannot see the path clearly. But we continue to walk courageously, trusting in the Lord all our days.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”

On this Father's Day weekend, I would like to use this line to reflect with you about someone who modeled it so well: Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary, the foster father of Jesus, and the patron of the Universal Church. Saint Joseph indeed “walked by faith, not by sight.” And he leads us by his example.

Three things stand out for me about him: (1) Joseph was sometimes perplexed, (2) he was often marginal, on the sidelines, and (3) he knew all about loss. I hope that you might find a bit of yourself in this reflection.

Joseph was sometimes perplexed. The love of his life, Mary, was pregnant and Joseph was not the father. He was torn between his trust in her and what seemed like “the obvious.” There was so much that Joseph did not understand.

We are also sometimes perplexed. There is so much that we do not understand in our world: why people of different races and nations sometimes do not get along with each other, why a pandemic ever happened, why acts of violence keep on occurring, why families break up, and so forth.

But notice Joseph: he didn't just stand there. He did what he could do. He led his pregnant wife, Mary, on a journey to Bethlehem and found a place for her to have her Baby. He fled with his family to Egypt to escape King Herod, like the von Trapp family fleeing the Nazis in “The Sound of Music.” Joseph supported his family by his carpentry and he taught Jesus the trade.

Joseph speaks to everyone who is perplexed and says: “Know that you are a beloved child of God. Remain faithful to your beliefs. Embrace

your responsibilities. Do what **you** can do. You **can** do something to make your place in the world an even better one.”

Joseph was often marginal, on the sidelines. He comes and goes very quickly in the Gospel accounts. Not one word of his has been recorded in the Scriptures. Like the Lone Ranger, everyone seems to ask, “Who was that masked man?” We really don’t know much about him. But we do know that Joseph had dreams.

Joseph speaks to people today who feel marginal: the lonely and the addicted, the disappointed and the discouraged, the hurting and the poor – anyone who dreams that things could be better.

Joseph speaks to us all: “Hold on to your dreams. Have faith in God. Remember that Mary of Nazareth would become Mary the Queen of Heaven, and the Baby born in Bethlehem would become the Savior of the world. And Joseph the carpenter eventually emerged from the margins and now the whole world knows him as our Saint Joseph.”

And Saint Joseph knew all about loss. He “lost” Mary, his wife, to God, as it were. He lost the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple and had to go looking for Him. He lost his own life somewhere between that search for the Boy Jesus and when Jesus began His public ministry when Jesus was thirty years old.

Joseph speaks to everyone who has suffered a loss: to those who have lost family members and friends through death or distance or estrangement, who have lost their jobs or their health or their independence.

Joseph knew the feelings of loss. But he also knew that God would have the last word. That God, in His own good time, can turn our losses into the very means of our growing in compassion and service of others. How does one alcoholic remain sober? By helping another alcoholic remain sober. Loss can be “the mustard seed” of our growing in strength.

If you, like Saint Joseph, sometimes feel perplexed or marginal or hurting over losses, look to him for his prayers and his example. He “walked by faith, not by sight.”

We ask Saint Joseph – husband of Mary, foster father of Jesus, and patron of the Universal Church – to be our guide as we try to be like him today and “walk by faith, not by sight.”

Happy Father’s Day, everyone!