

LAUGHTER IS GOOD

I told my kids I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle.
So they unplugged my computer and threw out my wine.

You're in incredible shape," the doctor said. "How old are you again?"

"I am 78," the man said.

"78!" remarked the doctor. "How do you stay so healthy? You look like a 60-year-old."

"Well my wife and I made a pact when we got married that whenever she got mad, she would go into the kitchen and cool off and I would go outside for a walk to settle down," the man explained.

"What does that have to do with it?" asked the doctor.

"I've pretty much lived an outdoor life."



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FR. MIKE'S SERMON FOR TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

How many times have you read in the Bible or heard a preacher tell you to "Have Faith in God?" Today I want to share with you a spiritual term called the "Faith of God." What does this mean? Does God have Faith? Yes He does. St. Paul talks about this in 2 Timothy: "If we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny himself." The Faith of God means God believes in Himself. This is part of the "Good News" Jesus proclaimed. The God of Faith means God has to be faithful to you even when you are not faithful to God. We call that sin. God has to be faithful to you even when you are unfaithful. We call that Mercy. God has to do this because if He doesn't He denies His very self. There is no way God could deny who He is. What makes God, "God" is that He always forgives, He always loves you. The Faith of God in Himself shows itself in two ways:

- Jesus dying on the Cross for our sins
- Divine Favor

It is wonderful to see "Divine Favor" in action. We see it today in the Gospel. Jesus gave ten dirty, sore laden lepers new skin as soft as a silk pillowcase. I believe all of you at one time in your life has received a Divine Favor. A Divine Favor is where God chooses you, zeroes in on you to receive a wonderful blessing that makes you say "Wow, that must be God who did this." It's like God singles you out for a miracle. The Virgin Mary understood this so well when the Angel Gabriel told her, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God." (Luke 1:30)

One of the most powerful experiences of Divine Favor I ever witnessed occurred at the old Care Unit Hospital in Cincinnati. For eight years I helped people suffering from the disease of alcoholism and drug addiction find recovery. One of my co-workers I will call Ann, to protect her anonymity. She very much wanted to join the Catholic Church but was afraid. She had profound guilt about some bad things she did while drinking. I tried to convince her of God's Mercy but she couldn't accept it because she couldn't forgive herself. One afternoon we were working together on October 1st, the feast day of St. Theresa the Little Flower. I told Ann the story of the Little Flower Saint how she would give a rose from Heaven in answer to someone's prayer. Ann was very skeptical. She said, "I have to see this to believe it." Right before the shift change at 3:00 p.m. when Ann would soon leave, I invited her and two other co-workers, who just happened to be Catholic, to join hands in a circle of prayer. We prayed that Ann would open her heart to God's Mercy. We prayed that St Theresa would send her a rose as sign that God truly forgives her. I prayed, "And when she gets that rose Ann has to look into becoming a Catholic." Ann laughed and said, "You Catholics are so superstitious."

In just seconds that laughter gave way to a look of utter disbelief. Ann, who was facing the doorway, saw a fellow worker Bob walk through. He carried in his hand a tall slender vase with one red rose in it. He walked up to Ann, smiled, and gave it to her. He said, "This is for you. Congratulations on your one year sobriety anniversary." We all looked at Bob like he was a messenger from Heaven. He had no idea what we just prayed for. Ann began to shake and cry uncontrollably. We held her in a group hug which now included Bob who also is Catholic. That day she began the healing of letting go of the guilt. Finally I said to her, "Ann, you will make a great Catholic. I think God has chosen you to help other Catholics recover from their guilt." She joked, "It seems like Catholics are always recovering from something." I said, "You'll fit right in." Ann received instruction and was received into the Catholic Church at the next Easter Vigil. One of the joys of my priesthood was to give her Holy Communion at the Mass I celebrated in the Care Unit Hospital. Jesus healed Ann's leprosy of guilt. Ann didn't just thank God in words, she showed it in action. She helped many others become "Recovering Catholics." Thank you Jesus...