

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Nov 13th 2014

Memorial of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, Virgin

In his letter to Philemon, who owns the slave, Onesimus, that Paul is sending back to his master, Paul tells Philemon that he has “experienced joy and encouragement from your love.” Paul reminds Philemon that though he is the owner of Onesimus, both he and his slave are united in Christ as brothers, and that that lens rather than the slave/master lens should take priority. It’s hard for me to accept the idea of slavery, as that institution has had and still has a large, negative effect on the United States of America, and various forms of slavery still damage and demean brothers and sisters in our world. Yet Paul does not de-cry slavery but rather asks Philemon to see his slave with new eyes and to accept him back as a brother in Christ, and to welcome his slave back as he would welcome Paul.

Paul is trying to get Philemon to see Onesimus with new eyes and to be aware that with his former slave is an opportunity to experience that God is present with both of them and that they can have a new relationship.

Right now, I’m challenged to have a new relationship with my son, who has recently moved back home after a year of living on his own. We are having some bumps and bruises in our relationship as he gets used to living at home again and my wife, our daughter, and I get used to having him live in our home. I’m blessed with Teresa’s support and partnership as a parent, yet I don’t know that I always take the opportunity to see my son with new eyes. I’m challenged to see the reign of God among us in our house, as Luke has joined us again to be part of our household. Luke does bring his own gifts and goodness, but I seem to focus on the down side when there are disagreements. I know what I am called to do, as a Christian father, and yet I sometimes feel lost in a “why can’t this be easier” mind-set. I am reminded that I am called to love and support all of my family members, but I keep running smack dab into my own selfishness. May God enlighten all of us and send the Holy Spirit of Wisdom to open our eyes and minds to the presence of God among us, each day.

I feel the words Psalm 146 call out to me, “blessed is the one whose help is from the Lord.” What that means to me is “be aware” that God is with you wherever you are, and that God is to be found in all places, all people, and all circumstances. I know that I need to keep looking for and discovering God in my home and my son these days, yet I often don’t look hard enough or only see what is wrong.

Let’s pray for the ability to have a different lens on our challenging relationships, so that we can find God in the challenging people and circumstances of daily life. May we all be open to being transformed by encountering God in the depths of our being each day and answering the call to see each person as Christ sees them.

Marty Kalkowski - Chaplain in the School of Pharmacy Creighton University