

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Nov 23rd 2014

Even though I struggled with the intellectual side of physics as a high school student in the classroom, I completely understood the practical side of physics as a seven year old in my parents' driveway. I was doing something I shouldn't have been. By myself, I was pretending to drive my mother's Z-28 Camero by moving the gear shifter from park to neutral and back to park just quick enough to feel the car roll a few inches down the incline of the driveway. For a fleeting moment, I was Mario Andretti.

That was, until the gear shifter got stuck in neutral and the car began to slowly roll back down the driveway toward the street. In my panic, I jumped out of the car and ran behind it to try to stop its slow roll backward with absolutely no success. Fortunately, I was not hurt and the car came to a stop at the bottom of the driveway. Though I didn't appreciate it at the time, my understanding of momentum had been firmly cemented in my mind.

Today's readings are about the momentum of God's love. When we are willing and open to it, that love transfers through us to others and back to God.

There are many powerful images for God. Today's readings speak clearly of God as a shepherd. This is such an active image of our God. In the first reading from Ezekiel, God speaks a litany of vows to the people. "I will look after and tend...I will rescue...I will give them rest...I will seek out...I will bring back...I will bind up...I will heal." I find great assurance in a God who is this way. I take time to listen to which of these phrases most speaks to my heart's needs today (and I invite you to do the same). "Kyle, I will look after and tend to you...I will give you rest." I feel the momentum and gravity of God's care for me. As I do, that beautiful Psalm rings out, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose. Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul." In the midst of a world filled with chaos, consumption and confusion, that is just what we need to hear from our God.

In the Gospel reading this reality of God's love for us gets taken one step further by Jesus. He calls us to share that love with those around us, especially those most in need of love. This is when the momentum really takes on new shape - the energy gets transferred from one to another. Jesus does not mince words in speaking to his disciples. He tells them in no uncertain terms that when they give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill and visit the prisoner they are doing these things to him.

An image that helps remind me of Christ's lesson today is that of the tabernacle. When I enter the sacred space of a Catholic Church, I reverence Christ's real presence in the tabernacle. As I receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist, I envision myself as a living tabernacle for Christ's presence. And as I go about my day, I work to see each and every person I encounter as a living, breathing tabernacle

standing before me. It is my responsibility and call as a follower of Christ to reverence that presence of the divine in each and every person.

As a global church community we have come to the end of another liturgical year. Today's solemnity of Christ the King invites us to take stock of how we have been loved and shown love in the past year and to prepare for how we will enter into the pregnant season of Advent.

God's love for us is a powerful force. The momentum of that force moves us. We are called to allow that momentum to transfer through us to others by how we treat them. When we do this, we are loving God in return.

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