

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, May 26th 2017**

Suffering, sadness and despair can be a part of our human condition. Recently a dear colleague and friend who provided to me enormous personal and professional support was diagnosed with a terminal illness and in a very brief period of time left us. His life was one of service and his example was an inspiration to scores of people whom he touched. We may often, in our despair and desolation, ask God “why”? Why do bad things happen to me, to those close to me, to those we love? It is difficult in the depths of our pain to believe that we will ever recover, let alone believe that God has a plan of joy and salvation for us. An attitude of hope and gratitude is challenging to maintain in our life’s journey when confronted with grief and sorrow, whatever the origin.

The example Jesus uses should begin to restore hope even in the depths of the pain of our human suffering. The example of the pain of childbirth is profound in that the joy of seeing the face of one’s newborn is worth the pain. While Jesus was most specifically referring to the pain the disciples will feel upon his crucifixion and their joy resulting from the risen Christ. Today’s Gospel reveals the promise that when Jesus sees them again they will experience a joy “no one can take away from you.”

When we are in despair, we can take comfort in the everlasting presence of the risen Jesus who in faith is with us always. Whatever our journey, and indeed we know we will experience sufferings in our lives, despite the inevitable tribulations we can experience the same joy promised to the disciples. In faith and in prayer, we must remember that for those close to Jesus, pain and joy are not incompatible.

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