

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 4th 2019

Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

In my hometown of 6500 residents my siblings and I could get anywhere we needed to go by riding our bikes or walking. One Sunday morning my brother and I headed to Mass by ourselves as our parents were going to attend Mass at different times so they could take care of the little girls. My brother and I felt proud to be trusted to get ourselves to Mass. Apparently the pride extended to our behavior at Mass as we were whispering to one another through much of the liturgy. When Mass was over a woman who neither of us knew said she felt disappointed in us and she was going to speak to our parents about our behavior. My brother and I realized that next time we were in church we had better behave more appropriately. But we also marveled at the revelation that she knew we were the children of Dick and Betty.

This memory came to me as I read today's first reading from John which reminds me I am a beloved child of God. There are times in my life where I drift away from that awareness yet others in my life are testament to the love I experience from God. When I stumble and commit sin, I can learn from that sin just my brother and I learned how our behavior in church impacts the people who were sitting near us.

John reminds us that those who have hope based on gaining a deeper understanding of God's love make themselves pure as God is pure. I need this reminder that I am always a "work in progress" and that my sinfulness is not all or nothing. Many times my sinfulness comes not from a diabolical plan but from a lack of empathy or from a desire to enjoy myself. My brother and I did not walk to Mass that Sunday so long ago with a plan to disrupt the prayer of those around us. We were clueless kids who were rather skilled at having fun where ever we were. Yet with our bad behavior we were reminded that we were the beloved children of Dick and Betty and of God. And we were shown a path on how we could do better in the future.

As the Christmas and New Year's events are behind us and when we begin to return to daily routines it is helpful to for me to pray for the grace to be reminded that I am a beloved child of God. This knowledge helps me be more present to others and more open to the wisdom of those I encounter. I pray for insights on how I can use my gifts to serve the kingdom of God. And if you see me at Mass please come sit near me as I promise I will behave.

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