



### 3rd Saturday after Pascha

*"...If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you;..."*

This week was full of stories about hope that grows in places where abuse and unjustified hate are dominant. The stories revealed both the hate for life and the destruction that this brings upon the people and the vulnerability and fragility of those who fight against it with integrity. They also help us connect in a personal way with the paralysis of the ill person in today's gospel. Many times within the community we live with a desire to see the real hope because we get to touch from very close the hands of those who are bitten. As we know, real hope does not come from the success of those who are oppressed but from the integrity of their faith.

They share these stories with us because they want to receive from us the reassurance that the good fight is worth fighting; that, as someone told me, their life is worth living even though they are fighting to live abundantly while being oppressed.



**The first witness** comes from a brother who has gone through the proof of fire (we've mentioned him before). He suffered physical persecutions for choosing to be a Christian back in his own country. On Wednesday he showed me some images with those who persecuted him and his family. The images were even more powerful because his witness was now associated with a

human face. We forget that evil has no face and that it is using people to do its work. Thus evil becomes personal through its involvement of people. Only love is personal. Evil is not. That's why people are involved. Evil does not receive a face; therefore it just tries to disfigure the human icon of God, both on the side of the oppressors and of the oppressed. Our brother commented that those who abused him physically are so thirsty for power, control and blood shedding, that nothing really satisfied them. He also said that in his home country the poor and those most vulnerable are never safe but they are cruelly persecuted. "That's why I chose to be a Christian", he told me. "Because the Christians love the poor and embrace them like brothers and sisters".

If we are trying to become Christian we should all say "amen" to his witness and start practicing that. Otherwise he might think that he was wrong in the first place and regret choosing to follow Christ. What he knew in his heart as being true should become the reality of every church community otherwise he would have no place to go and rest his burden and share his truth.

### **The second witness**

The same day, a conversation I had with an immigrant homeless brother from Ethiopia, revealed to me that there is something special about the relationship between the poor and God. This man comes to the mission every day, for food and sometimes some clothes. Every day he reveals more and more about his life and about being on the street. This week he told me that he did not choose to be homeless, it just happened after he lost his job. Back in Ethiopia his father was a colonel in the army and he learned to drive cars since he was a young boy. Here in Canada he used to work with cars. When he lost his job he did not know anything about what that implied. He shared with me the absurdity of the system, when he approached the shelter intake center looking for a bed in wintertime. The people were well intended but the way the system was organised made no sense. He told me how they gave him a token to go somewhere on the outskirts of the city. He was told he needed to make it there in one and a half hours otherwise he would lose his bed. He tried; he waited one hour for a bus and then it was already too late to make it out of the city, so he decided to sleep outside, in a park. This seemed profitable to him, he started to sketch people, a skill he did not know he had. It keeps him occupied and gives him stillness. I asked him how it is for him to be outside. He said the poor man must take all that is coming to him; the heat, the cold, the humid bad weather and whatever else that may happen. He cannot complain. This is the condition of being poor. But then, both of us concluded that the poor man also takes in God because he does not complain and receives Him as he receives everything else, with humility.

He shared with me his thoughts about this, telling me when and how he prays. Just to prove that by being open to what comes your way you encounter Christ and you have a good deal of time to spend with Him. Being marginalized is a vulnerable condition that allows you to see the presence of Christ more clearly in your life. It also makes you aware of the movement of your heart who always desires Him.

### **The third witness**

There is an oppression upon life these days and we are not the only ones noticing it. Life is hunted today and few are those who open their windows (not the virtual ones) to watch and be terrified at the scene.

Those who observe the scene are not always those we necessarily expect. A Muslim brother who volunteers with us wanted to ask me a question about euthanasia in Canada. He was helping in the kitchen, but felt uneasy about the question troubling his mind. He says he can understand all the things about people being free but, he added, "my gut feeling tells me this is totally wrong".

We agreed to take time and speak later; he was getting ready to serve the meal; I was running around the mission, without knowing why, as usual.

We met after lunch and the discussion was more elaborate. I was so touched by his straight judgement and by the way he got there. He said that suicide is a temptation for this generation but in this suffering the help comes from thinking that you cannot inflict that type of punishment on those you know and who know you. He also said that when Bill C-7 was passed, it was the saddest day in his life and he felt crushed.

Our conversation kind of shared a mutual feeling about being lost and defeated. However, it gave me great hope to see young people who can see through the smog and who are revolted by the way life is treated and hunted down today. He was talking on behalf of hope for this generation.

We often wonder today what can be done. What can we do? A sister who knows what she is talking about, told me that the answer is simple and not much needs to be done. People are fighting for life. This is their battle and their witness. We just need to show them that their lives are worth living.

I was satisfied with that. How do we do that?

#### **From the Sunday of the Paralytic; John 5:1-15**

**"One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"**

*Deut 2:13: Rise up „said I and get over the brook of Zered“ ...so the days we took to come...until we crossed over the valley of Zered, were thirty-eight years, **until all generation of men of war died out of the camp, as the Lord swore to them..**"*

The paralysis of the one who is raised today is deeply connected with sin. His own sins - "*Go and sin no more*" - and the sins of those who surrounded him who couldn't care less about his illness. The healing is brought to our attention today when we sing Christ is Risen because this type of paralysis, of the one who was healed and of those who surrounded him with indifference, are rooted in the same mire of clay. The same mire Christ descends into, to raise Adam and Eve. It is what gets stuck fast in us.

We see and we witness today indifference for life and lack of compassion, that keeps people captive in their own suffering. This indifference is not, however, accidental. It is intended. As it happens with today's harm reduction policy. It is not accidental, it is caused by the system's need to feed itself on the life of the innocents. And so the system makes us see only the paralysis of man and not his face. It makes us forget that the one who cannot move has a heart that desires



healing. The paralysis left alone cannot be healed. It is not the only thing that the system brings to our attention. It goes even farther, it makes you believe that the paralysis is the consequence of the man who suffers. It comes from self determination. In other words it is the consequence of one's own sins. And the system proclaims that, on a Sabbath, the paralysis is untouchable. In other words, the reality of the soul paralyzed by its own sins is an ideological dogma that could not be changed. The healing is not desired by the sinful man, because he chose his path and God respects it and does not act against this self-destructive "freedom". To understand better the reality of the one who suffers because of his own sins, it is worthy to look at the scriptures that tell us what type of sin keeps you paralyzed for 38 years with no hope for healing.

There are commentators who connect the raising of the paralytic with "Rise up, said I and get over the brook of Zered" (Deut. 2:13).

It is the moment when those who wandered in the wilderness for 38 years change an entire generation in order to pass into new life. It took a generation, the scriptures tell us, so those who did not have the knowledge of good and evil yesterday may enter into a new life today.

The generation who could not pass through is the generation of the "men of war", who would not listen to the Lord and presumptuously went up into the mountain to shed blood.

This is the sin that hears the Word of God, but presumptuously, the scriptures tell us, shed the innocent blood. This is the sin that stops you at the gate of heaven.

This is the sin of those who hate without cause, who alienate among themselves the one who is the son of their mother (Psalm 68). Those who abandon the innocent and make sure there is nobody around him when he is persecuted. Those who make prayer the only friend of the abandoned. For the innocents who are persecuted, prayer is their brother and sister that offer to God their life as an act of righteousness.

The paralysis of today's gospel is one without prayer and it is therefore hopeless. It does not reach out to God because it has been persecuting Him. His house becomes desolate "*Let their back do though continually bow down. Pour out upon them Thy wrath, and let the fury of Thy wrath take hold upon them. Let their habitation be desolate, and in their tents let there be none to dwell*". (Ps 68, 28; Please read the whole psalm).

This is the desolation of a house where the persecutor has become lonely. All those that persecuted with him abandoned him at the end. It is the consequence of evil acts that cannot be

consumed but by one's own condemnation. The many who persecuted without a cause the innocent man have become one, lonely and paralyzed.

*Let them be blotted out of the living, and with the righteous let them not be written (Ps 68).*

When you cannot be an agent of evil anymore, being paralyzed by your own self determination, when you have no more strength to harm, because to carry evil is the heavy yoke that paralyzes you, then you are left alone because you cannot serve anymore. It is Christ Who visits you then. Evil never stops, misguided human will does stop because we are not a bottomless empty pit.

Today we see that the resurrection is touching the sin that kept us out of the land of the living, the root that inflicts upon others the temptation of death. Any participation in that is confronted today with the encounter with Christ. It is hard for us to understand how that can be. For both those who were harmed and those who harmed. For different reasons but with the same bewilderment. How can the intentional desire to harm life become a desire for healing for one's own soul? The unjustified hate for life is turned today in desire for healing. Indeed, the light of the resurrection is searching the depths of our being and gives good desire to leave to any human soul even when the soul is hating her own being.

The loneliness of the persecuted man is not the same as the loneliness of the one who persecutes. In Saturday's gospel Jesus talks to those who suffer because they chose to love and witness life. On Sunday he heals the illness of the soul who is paralyzed for hating without a cause. The church wants us to see this in the light of the resurrection and close to each other, even though in the light of the day they are so apart from each other.

### **Fioretti - Br Luke**

#### **More fortunate than emperors...**

A man came to the mission today without shoes, wishing to use the phone. It turns out he was from Brampton and did not want to go back there because he knows that if he turns himself in, they will keep him many months in the hospital and put him on medications.

He had a long, heated conversation with his mom on the phone. Afterward he apologizes. "I'm sorry to keep you. I can tell I'm disturbing everyone here. Thank you for spending time with me." He says more about how he got here, "I started out in Brampton shelters, but people were trying to rob me. I've been avoiding them all night and took a cab into Toronto by mistake. He came here thinking it was a shelter. The shelters say he has too much money to stay with them and to wait a couple of days. He does not want to sleep on a bench again like he did last night. "What should I do?" he asked me suddenly "Do you have any advice for me? We are sitting together in Fr. Nicolaie's office under a giant icon of Christ's face. He says he has no faith. He says he has not prayed in years. "I have seen too many bad things to believe." I offer him our prayer book and he writes for us to pray for his mother - the same mother I have been listening to him argue with on the phone in Italian for many minutes. "She won't let me stay with her," he says. We sat together for a long time in the office. He does not see a way out. "I have been struggling with this for so long," he says. On his way out of the church he asks to make a donation. "They won't let me into the shelter if I have too much cash" he says, as he stuffs about 70 dollars into the candle stand collection slot.

### **Living Water...**

Outside Good Neighbours in Scarborough there was lots of life today. The foodbank, chapel, kitchen and office were humming along inside but outside the building there was life too. People were waiting to come inside out there, but there was a palpable energy. People would wave when they arrived and greet one another and were more or less happy to be approached. I saw a new person sitting amongst others beside the tree. She was wearing colourful clothes that made her look like an apostolic character from a James Tissot gospel scene, maybe Mary Magdalene or the rich young ruler. She was sitting there sipping a coffee with whipped cream on top. I asked her why she was there i.e. did she have a food appointment or need something? She said she was here for the atmosphere. She seemed to like being around the people and watching them go in and out. This seemed kind of funny to me as it was kind of cold and the mission faces a busy street with cars roaring by. She said it reminded her of the coffee time after mass when she was a child. Looking around, it did seem like an interesting place to sit. You had a mix of movement and stability-- some people sitting and chatting for most of the day but also busy volunteers popping in and out bringing things. You had a steady trickle of young Indian families and children waiting in line for food moving inside for food with the occasional homeless person streaking onto the scene for food or bathroom. It reminded me of one of the little waterfalls in the Don River by Broadview where the fish try to jump upstream. A good place to sit.

### **SHARE THE GOOD NEWS AND REJOICE WITH US**

The whole community rejoices at the good news of Karine and Eli's marriage that is going to take place on Saturday, June 5th. Please keep them in your prayers during all this time. As they witness to each other the light of the resurrection that shines on their faces and warms their hearts.

Keep in your prayers the catechumens:

Eliana, Wayne, Atty and Madison, Valerie.

Hearer: Veneranda and her daughter and Zachary

Please pray for:

#### ***The sick***

Lynn

Michelle

Emanuel (Mani)

Stefanie

Geoff

Joey

Evangelia

Sophia

Melanie

Césare

Tanya

Piper

Darius

*Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral*

*Brenda*

Anne Tyron's husband who is sick

Anna Avairo's daughter going regularly to the emergency room.

Vol Gomaz heart condition and immigration matters

Tharsini's daughter (leukemia)

Levlin's two children who are sick

Sri's mother passed away, he is depressed

Helen

BettyAnn and Paul.

Wafaa and Sana sister (cancer)

Rejoice

Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly; Tom;

Please pray for health and salvation:

Mom waiting for baby Tejasree

Prashastha

Maria and Dingo

Crisent

Helen

Greta

Elizabeth

Dean

John

Liz

Crisent

Ann Brown

Elizabeth

Sifie

Allen

Leon

Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting

Aaron, Anastas, Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, James, Peter, Christine.

Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra. Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family

Atlaw single mom at shelter, Vernevil family

the family of

Kenide  
Sathiya  
Sena  
Vinothiny  
Yvienne  
Abdul  
Sakanthalathevy  
Jumke  
Naimi  
Anish

JOSHUA DANIEL -REALLY HEARTFELT REQUEST FOR PRAYER AS HE IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP ON A GOOD PATH

Maria Lolita Soliman Torres, Jonathan , Richard, Richard, Mary , Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased: Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei Agostina ,Carminda

St. Silouan Chapel, May 23rd 2021

1

of

8

©2021 St. John the Compassionate Mission

[www.stjohnsmission.org](http://www.stjohnsmission.org)