

## Trusting and Being Thankful

One of the honors I have as a priest is to visit people and celebrate the anointing of the sick with them. Formerly called and often still referred to as the “last rites” the sacrament isn’t just for when the moment of death is near, but it’s also not just celebrated because one has a cold or a bad hair day. The sacrament is celebrated typically if a person is battling something chronic, a major illness, going in for surgery, or is very advanced in age and has grown weaker.

Most recently, I was called to a hospital to celebrate it with a person who was preparing for possible surgery. However, as the time they weren’t too sure of the outcome, but what struck me with this person was how at peace they were of whatever was in store. The person also had their share of suffering in life, losing loved ones at a young age, and having other hardships. But you wouldn’t have known it by their attitude. Indeed, I was reminded of my visits to my grandmother Pat when I was in seminary; when she was in the hospital and had terminal pancreatic cancer, she was simply at peace and talked nothing of her condition, but just was grateful you were in the room for a conversation.

From my grandma and so many people I’ve visited with over the years, one of the things that I’m reminded of again and again is the importance of both trusting in God’s plan, and also being thankful.

With respect to the faith, in the first reading this week from the second book of Kings, Naaman who is afflicted with leprosy at first refuses to trust in God, at first being prideful, but when his servants convince him to listen to Elisha the prophet, he does as he was told to do and is cured. We never know what is around the next corner in life, but what is important to remember is that God is in control. So it’s worth thinking about how do we trust God? Do we listen to the prophets God puts in our midst like Naaman did? Are we open to change when God wants us to do something different in life? Can we relent of being overly controlling both with ourselves and others and discern God’s plan? Can we let go and trust others like Naaman?

With respect to thankfulness, I know I’ve certainly at times daydreamed and thought “if only I had this.” But then I think about the people I’ve talked to who have endured suffering. One I’ll never forget is a woman named Mary who lives in the greater Washington DC area. By now you know I typically have a story to start my homily, and in this case the story I read about her I was so fascinated with I managed to reach her on the phone and talk to her. Mary is an accomplished pianist but also very active with the homeless; but she’s also lost a husband to ALS, nearly lost two children, and has battled chronic illnesses throughout her life. But her attitude was resilient and in our talk when we spoke of prayer and suffering she stressed the importance of gratitude and being thankful for the simple things; another day of life; the air we breathe; that we can think clearly, etc. And as I look at each day of my life while I make requests in prayer, I also can think of so many blessings each day brings. Even as I write this a gentle golden retriever is on my couch next to me as I type on the laptop; the blessing of

Emmett and Kirby has been incredible. Then there's my family and friends; being in a kind and supportive parish with a great staff; the birds of the air; the changing leaves; seeing the sunrise as I walk with Emmett; seeing the stars come out. Indeed I think if we all made a list it would be pretty extensive. God is so good, hopefully we remember to show our thanks for all that we are given.

Have a great week, and every day may we ask for both the trust and faith that we need to accept our crosses and the gratitude God deserves for the goodness and mercy he has shown us. As we say at our school, God is good - all the time!

God bless,

Fr. Paul