

April 9-10, 2016

Thoughts from the pastor,

How's life? There are so many times when I wish I had the time to sit down with each one of you and find out the answer to that question. When I was the Director of Pastoral Care at Bergan Hospital I would remind the staff whenever possible to be careful about asking "passing" questions like: "How are you doing?" It is not that this is a bad question. It is a good one. It is just that in a hospital the answer is important and many of us have a tendency to ask those kinds of questions in passing and then be gone before the person can respond. That is why most people just answer, "Fine."

Within a parish family is another area in which we should not ask questions in passing. This is a place in which we come with our worries and woes. It bothers us when it feels like God is not listening to us. That can be amplified when the people representing God really don't listen. But it doesn't help to simply not ask, although there are times when that is all we can do. I know that many times I find myself on the way to try and fix a problem that one person presented to me only to run into another person in need. Many times I have to silently pray, God that one is yours to handle.

I hear this so often from parents. So often you find yourselves being pulled in many directions as the needs of your children present themselves to you all at once. It is simply the reality of life. We can't fix everyone's problems. If that were possible this would already be a perfect world because I know that my generation certainly had that attitude in the 1960's. That is why we need to remember why we are here. Our life on this earth is a test to see if we are open to being a part of the family of God in heaven.

This past week I mentioned this in a couple of my weekday homilies. I used the example of how I would go jogging on the gravel roads when I was stationed in Menominee, NE. After a short time I realized that there was a lot of trash in the ditches, so I got out big trash bags and cleaned it up. Mission accomplished, so then I could jog without the mess. Wrong. More trash was dumped and more blew in. Each time I would then go out with a little grocery sack and pick up what had accumulated in the previous days. The problem is that it could have become a full-time occupation, when my original goal was to jog so I could live healthier and longer.

Sometimes we get the mentality of fixing everything and forget that our real goal is to live forever in heaven. As a priest I could become a fulltime social worker and just solve the problems of my neighbors. Some priests took that up in the 1960's and 1970's. There have also been priests who are the opposite and only do sacramental work. The reality is that we must do both, love God and love our neighbor. We are being tested on this. We need to balance praising God with helping to clean up some of the trash that our neighbors may be dealing with in their lives. That is what the corporal works of mercy are all about. Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Clothe the naked. Visit the imprisoned. Visit the sick. Bury the dead. The spiritual works help also. Admonish the sinner. Instruct the ignorant. Counsel the doubtful. Comfort the sorrowful. Forgive all injuries. Pray for the living and the dead. These are all things we must do if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. But what about God?

This weekend we will have an opportunity to focus on that more than sacramentally. This is the weekend of the concert for the windows. It is at 2pm in the church. You have seen what the windows are like. There are more that can be installed. If you can't join us the second collection next weekend will be specifically for the windows. I hope and pray that these windows will lift our hearts to the Lord.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank