

Feb. 17-18, 2018

Thoughts from the pastor,

“Once upon a time” is the start of a fairy tale. “It was a dark and stormy night” is the start of Snoopy’s book, that he never finished writing according to Charles Schulz. After having gone through Ash Wednesday either title could be how we think of what God is doing in our lives.

Remember that fairy tales always have big problems to overcome before the happily ever after part. Ashes are a reminder of what we must face before we get the happily ever after in heaven. That is when all the injustices and the painful occurrences are resolved and we are with the ones we love. Many people think that somehow God wants us to have that happiness in this life. Others think that somehow it is owed to us after working so hard and being good that our old age will just be filled with joy and peace. Both of these wishful thinkers find themselves going through frustration after frustration waiting for that peaceful moment to come, when all the problems of this world will just leave us alone.

Surprise, surprise! This world is all about the “problems of this world.” Only by passing through death and entering heaven will they be gone. And this doesn’t happen because of all our hard work. If it were up to us, we would end up bringing all our problems into the next world and it would be far worse than “a dark and stormy night.” It would be a dark and stormy eternity of injustice and unending suffering. It is only through God that we can truly be rid of the sinful part of our nature. That is why the Resurrection is not necessarily good news, for by itself it is just a door into eternal torment. Only Mary and Jesus will enjoy it for they will not have a sinful nature to ruin it.

If we all just had glorified bodies that were immortal without any purifying, we would be simply sinning worse because we wouldn’t have the fear of death and hell. We would truly have created hell for ourselves and everyone else in that situation. But that is not what God is promising us. His purification of our sinful selves is an essential part of the plan. That is why Lent is so important. We start the purification by fasting and abstaining, Confession and Communion, and then working on strengthening the virtues within us; in order to show God that we are willing to work with his plan. He will not force that purification upon us. That would be like trying to give a cat a bath.

For that reason we must look into the areas that we realize we need growth or purification during this season and take time to seek God’s help in being transformed. Once again it is the Word of God, the Bible that can be the biggest help. The New Testament is filled with things that can challenge us to change.

As another reminder, this week Alan Ames will be coming to St. Elizabeth Ann Parish on Friday, 2/23, after the 5:30 Mass. So there will be no Stations of the Cross that evening. The next weekend will be our Parish Mission. This year St. James is not having a parish mission. Instead they are doing a series on the seven Sacraments. Those talks will start this Sunday, 2/18, and will go for five weeks, at 7-8:00pm in St. James Church.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank