

THE PASTOR'S POST

8a

Dear Parish Family:

You may know this but we do not choose the readings to proclaim each Sunday. The Church gives them to us to pray with. It unifies us a Church as these are the readings read everywhere on a particular day. Often, you can find a great thread that runs through some of them or all of them...and sometimes not so much. Sometimes verses are skipped or only parts of verses are put in. I often wonder why. Are they leaving out the good part? Is there something wrong? What is it? (So I may be the only one who thinks about these things, I admit this!)

Today's second reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy comes from the first chapter and begins with verse 8b, telling us to "bear our hardship of the Gospel with the strength that comes from God." This is a powerful call to action, a good Lenten message.

So why not begin with 8a? What is this citation in 8b linked to? Here it is: "So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord. nor of me, a prisoner for his sake". Don't be ashamed! I wonder if it would have been better for the Church to leave that in this week?

When we think of the commands of the Gospel, when we consider the calls that God is making of us (think of today's first reading), when we are presented with the possibility of an incredible encounter with Jesus, is it that sometimes we are ashamed. We are unsure if others will understand. Perhaps we are not ready to give a full explanation. Maybe we do not want to hear criticism or judgment.

This can be true in prayer, no? Are there times we are not free (internally) to pray as we wish. We certainly make sacrifices in prayer at liturgy, for example. We sacrifice some of our personal preferences because it is not what the Body of Christ does at Mass. This is correct.

Are there other times, though, we are not as free as we want to be in prayer. Maybe we are stuck.

Maybe we are embarrassed to change a way we have been praying for years? If you're giving testimony to the Lord - in your prayer - you have nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to work about.

This can be true in action, too, and maybe more so in our lack of action? Lately, as you know, we have been overwhelmed by the detention of moms and dads, caregivers and providers, who may be in civil violation of the law, but have no criminal issue.

(Last week, a father was picked up after dropping his wife off at work. He did nothing wrong. Pulled over because of how he looked. There is no other charge. He is now detained in New Jersey. His wife is supposed to give birth next month.)

I hear many come to me say, "This should not be," or "I did not think it would go like this," or "This is not how I want my country to be." Yet, we have to ask ourselves (as I ask

myself) am I doing everything I can to bring about change, transformation? Am I contacting political leaders? Protesting responsibly where appropriate? Speaking up in forums where I can? Discerning ways to action - within and outside the Church? Sharing the news with others to raise awareness? These questions relate not solely to immigration. You can apply to them many other teachings of the Church we are called to live out. What are my answers? Do I have to admit that at times I'm ashamed of the teaching of the Church? Or I'm fearful of the reaction? So I choose not to bear the hardship of the Gospel.

Is it possible that in both 8a and 8b, the writer of the second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy is speaking to us?

If so, hear another command from the Gospel. "Rise, and do not be afraid" (Matthew 17:7) confident in the God who is walking with us always, who loves us without limits.

Please pray for me, if you can. I promise the same.



Featherman