

THE CORNERSTONE

The Gospel presents a situation to us that Jesus presented to the chief priests and elders of the people. It is about a landowner and how he kept sending out servants to receive his share of the produce. He even sends his own son. None are accepted. Even his son is seized and killed because he would be next in line for the inheritance. While all of this is symbolic to the life Jesus would lead, a deeper reflection invites us to reflect on the announcement of the cornerstone. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone. We live in troubling times filled with uncertainty. We are challenged to embrace this cornerstone rejected by many and allow it to become the cornerstone of our very lives.

Over the past weeks as I have been in conversations with some, praying with others and celebrating Sacraments with even more, a deep realization is hanging over all of us. This pandemic is not going away. The heaviness of how it is affecting us continues to flex its weight. Schools are different, the uncertainty of the workplace or the prospect of even having a job at all has caused us to have to reprioritize. Though the fatigue of what we have to do seems to be never ending, we are invited to a new place with God. I keep asking myself, what I am to learn? What is this moment in time supposed to teach me? While I hear searching and fear in the voices of many, the pain of the unknown is powerful and it can steal our perspective.

Last week I set out on a journey to complete what I had committed to do. Earlier in the year I had signed up for the virtual Fox Valley Half Marathon. It was a first time experience for me because the race is always held on a Sunday and I am usually in church on Sunday. The requirement of the virtual race was to finish it before the end of September. On my day off on a gorgeous Thursday morning I set out to run. I placed the day in God's hands. Since I had not really trained for it, my goal was to finish. I trusted that in the few six mile runs I had done and all of the hour long walks and four mile jaunts along the river, I could finish. My goal was to do so without incurring any injuries. My mind was set just to be open. I never run or walk with music or with ear buds in my ears. Instead I allow the soundtrack of my heart, mind and soul to accompany me. That morning was a gift. As I set my Garmin watch to capture my experience and let me know how far I had gone, I set off. The first few miles clicked off faster than expected as used to happen in my running past. I had a habit of starting out too fast and then I would just gut it at the end. However, it seems this day God had a different plan for me.

As I ran, I reflected on my first ever marathon in Chicago. At that time I told very few people I was running for fear of not finishing and being an embarrassment. Why did I give what others thought so much power? I needed to face influences and influencers. I remembered running the New York Marathon just weeks after 9-11. It was uncertain there would even be a marathon. Everyone was on high alert and no one was really at peace. I recollected the groove I found myself in while running the Boston Marathon, still my fastest marathon. I recalled the running of the London Marathon and the Berlin Marathon when I did not know where I was because the race course was marked in kilometers. I could not get my mind to do the math so I ran into the unknown, never certain when I would finish. At the Tokyo Marathon I was recovering from pneumonia. I had lost most of the training for the last few weeks before the race, but I went forward with courage. Some marathons I was undertrained and for others I was overtrained and put too much pressure on the finish line. But on this beautiful September day God had a plan and I just had to keep the pace He had for me. I needed the past memories to help me cherish where I have been and the miles and people whom with I have shared those miles. I needed to pace myself to be open to know I could not get to the finish line without breaking it down and disciplining myself to just look at it as one mile at a time. What was I doing for this one mile? I did not worry about the ten more ahead of me. I needed to trust that though I might not finish like I had planned, I was learning about what I could do and be on this morning, on this day, at this time. It was a powerful morning. I ran faster than I ever thought possible for a 62 year old who doesn't train much, but just keeps moving. I will never be able to repeat this race, just like I will never be able to repeat any of my past marathons. They are a gift and I just have to place myself in this place where I am now and allow God to grasp the focus of my heart and soul and project them to my mind.

What did I learn? I learned we need to realize we are blessed to live in this time. Not everyone gets to live in a global pandemic, but we do. It will reveal our true self. I learned I need to enjoy being alive; to know the blessing of this moment. God has never made this time any less important than any other moment in history. Into this time He infuses His unconditional love and the power to redeem. What did I learn? I cannot get overwhelmed by all the things, the miles, the protocols and processes that I still have to do. I had to make a choice at mile four not to say "Oh no! I still have 9.1 more miles to go!" If I had allowed my mind to go there, I would have been walking until dark telling myself it is too far off to the finish line and I can't get there. I just stayed in the present moment, handling one mile at a time. We can handle the world and all it is throwing at us if we stay in the present moment, trust it and embrace it. We can't run ahead, we need to keep pace. What did I learn? God is not rejecting us. Even though we might reject Him, even though we may get angry at this plan, even though we might not understand why all this is happening, we have to realize even when we reject Him, He will never reject us. What a gift! Even when we reject Him, He will never reject us. This is our moment. Our faith is being tested, yet He is not finished with us, our town, our education and our country. He is the God of this time. He is the power of transforming love.

What did I learn? On a powerful morning, when I set out to just listen, He did not reject me. He is the cornerstone and we all belong to Him. All our fear will never overcome His desire to redeem us. All of our pain and suffering will not separate us from His love for us. What did I learn? We are loved and we belong to Him.

May we stay in this moment,



Fr. John J. Ouper



Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Parking Lot Transmitted Service

Saturday, October 17 - 11:30 AM

To plan for the Sacrament please RSVP by October 15
630-383-2306; pstast@stanneparish.org

This will be a Service that includes:

Liturgy of the Word (Readings from Sacred Scripture)

Homily

Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

PARKING LOT OPENS AT 11:00 AM
(REOPENING VOLUNTEER WILL DIRECT YOU WHERE TO PARK)
TUNE RADIO TO 87.9 FM TO LISTEN TO THE SERVICE

AT THE TIME OF ANOINTING

- YOU WILL BE DIRECTED TO DRIVE YOUR VEHICLE UNDER THE CANOPY.
- EVERYONE IN THE VEHICLE MUST WEAR A MASK
- STEP OUT OF THE CAR IF YOU ARE ABLE, IF NOT FATHER JOHN WILL ANOINT THROUGH THE VEHICLE WINDOW
- AFTER ANOINTING YOU LEAVE