

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, July 18, 2021

Blessed Interruptions

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Ephesians 2:13-18

Mark 6:30-34



Dr. Scott Kurtzman, chief of surgery at Waterbury Hospital, was on his way to deliver an 8:00 a.m. lecture when he witnessed one of the worst crashes in Connecticut history. A dump truck, whose driver had lost control, flipped on its side and skidded into oncoming traffic. The resulting accident involved twenty vehicles; four people died.

Kurtzman immediately shifted into trauma mode. He worked his way through the mangled mess of people and metal, calling out, “Who needs help?”

After about ninety minutes, when all sixteen victims had been triaged and taken to area hospitals, Kurtzman climbed back into his car, drove to the medical school, and gave his lecture — two hours late.

Over the years, Kurtzman has stopped at a half dozen crashes and assisted at three. “A person with my skills simply can’t drive by someone who’s injured,” says Kurtzman. “I refuse to live my life that way.” (*Excerpt from “[1001 Illustrations that Connect](#)”*)

Dr. Kurtzman’s example gives us a glimpse into the intensity of Jesus’ compassion for others as described in verse 34 of [today’s Gospel](#), “his heart was moved ...” A brief study into the Greek word used here can be helpful for us: σπλαγχνίζομαι (splagchnizomai)

describes compassion as coming from the “inward parts,” coming from the heart, liver, lungs, etc., as well as from one’s emotions like affectation, pity, tenderness. In other words, Jesus did not merely feel a fleeting sentimental concern for the vast crowd. He felt a movement from his interior that strongly compelled him into action to meet the needs of the people. What was the need to be met? Certainly, bread for their hungry stomachs, but more importantly, their souls hungered for the word of life, so Jesus generously supplied. But in the context of this Gospel passage, there is one tiny detail worth noting that makes all the difference: the apostles and Jesus were trying to get away to rest after ministry! In other words, the crowds interrupted their plan for respite after a time of ministry. The apostles were tired and were heading “to a deserted place to rest a while.”

Interruptions. That’s the key here. We all make our plans for the day, and we start to check off the items from the to-do list. One by one, we go about our day with our plans scribbled on a sticky note or on some app on our phone. And then it happens: that pesky interruption. Something happens that was not expected in our day that all of a sudden demands our attention. Maybe it’s a phone call from the school secretary saying that your child is sick; maybe your flight is delayed, and you’re stuck on the tarmac; maybe your mom is calling you with inconsolable tears. Any number of unforeseeable events can dramatically change the direction and mood of the day, and yet it is unavoidable. My heart usually becomes instantly filled with grumbling, not pity. Yes, sometimes there can be a feeling from within my interior, and usually it’s stress and anxiety, not compassion compelling me towards action. I have imagined what the personal responses of the apostles were at the situation. How did they respond? I bet that at least one of them might have responded the way I can to interruptions, ranging from, “How dare you interrupt me right now? Can’t you see I’m important and very busy?” to “C’mon man! Are you kidding me? I was just about to enjoy my coffee and cinnamon roll!”

For most of us, our interruptions aren’t usually of the extraordinary, life-threatening kind, as in the story of Dr. Kurtzman. Rather, our interruptions are a part of the normal daily living in a modern setting. They happen at work, at home, at church, on vacation,

on the commute to work or school, etc. Interruptions can be a source of irritation, and they can be an invitation to bless. We have the power to choose which!

Br. John-Marmion Villa

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
open my eyes of faith to see
Your illustrations of love
in the interruptions of my life today.
Lord, help me see these moments
as opportunities to love and to accept
Your love and the love of others.
Help me share the good news of Your
great love with everyone I know.
Slow me down, so that I can receive
and give to others.
In Jesus’ Name, Amen.