

Faith + Culture

Facing spiritual danger

The President of the United States met with another president lately. At the time of this meeting, our president was pilloried for being so incautious. Treachery was most certainly afoot, they suggested. Whether the danger was real or fake news, it had all of the drama of a long putt for eagle on the 18th green of Augusta, but none of the restraint.

The hue and cry got me thinking about how we

often fall similarly in our response to spiritual danger. The first counsel for one who sees a near occasion of sin or the activity of the tempter is "Flee!" Sadly, we do not heed this wise advice. I know that Jesus took on the devil in the desert, but we are not the Master, we are his disciples. In fact, we all too often look at our temptations not with caution, but with a recklessness that causes us to believe that to be tempted is to sin. Run to Jesus.

We should call a sin a sin and we should do so in a way that really helps the brother or sister who is tempted. It's no good clucking our tongues to our neighbor if we could much more easily say to

a brother, "I know what you're going through and I want to help" or to a sister, "I can see how that is tempting and I know a better way." We should do this because sin hurts, and there is always collateral damage. Standing back will eventually cause pain to others, and not just to the one headed down the primrose path.

Jesus tells us that "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and



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See Father Keith on back side

You are loved

The devil has been lying about something for a long time. The lie has taken many forms over the course of history. "You have worth, dignity, purpose, and value if..."

The Nazis said, "You have rights if you're a member of the Aryan race." The communists say, "You have dignity if you contribute to society." The secular humanists say, "You have purpose if you make it up for yourself." The architects behind social media say, "You matter if people notice." The materialists say, "You have value if you own enough stuff and wear the right thing."

But it's all the same lie from the same dark source, and it all ends in death: from the bodily death of the gas chamber, the gulag, the business man who takes a dive from a 10 story window

when his stock crashes, or the teen suicide, to the spiritual death of those who wander through life not knowing who they are, or why they are, or if they matter at all.

God's word tells us we have dignity, purpose, and value, not if but because.

One of my children asked me why I loved them and why I was proud of them. He qualified his question with "and don't just say it's because I'm your dad and you're my kid! I want real reasons!" I gave him reasons, praised his good qualities, but then clarified, "And do you think those reasons make you worthy of my love? What better reason could there possibly be for me to love you and be proud of you than the fact that you're my son? Do you think something you can do or accomplish would be a better reason? You are mine. That's why I love you."

That's why God loves us too. "You are mine."

- Isaiah 43:1

Your value in terms of accomplishments or sums of money will never measure up to the value you already have in His eyes. You are so infinitely valuable that God, in his infinite majesty, found you worth dying for. The cross reveals your true "net worth!"

It's up to you to align the way you see yourself with the way He does. Start recognizing and rejecting the lies you tell yourself about your worth. Get intentional about claiming the truth: "I am lovable, and I know that, because I am infinitely loved."

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God provides, feed the fish



Deacon Kris
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God provides. Whenever we gather, we need to listen, focus our thoughts and respond from our heart, a heart filled with the love of Christ. Early in our lives we need to learn to provide for and to care for the many things that are around us. Maybe we started with a fish and a bowl. Who really knows who came first, but one thing is for sure, if you get a fish you need a bowl.

And when the fish first arrives, if it is any kind of fish at all, it comes with water. And we will figure out that if we place the water and fish in the bowl, things seem to work out quite well. And as the day draws to a close, we ask ourselves "Where should we put our fish so that when we get up tomorrow, we will still have our fish?" More than likely, a table or counter is near

and the fish is placed there for safe keeping. And life goes on happily ever after. Or does it?

As we continue our daily lives, running by the fish every day, what do we see? Our fish is not so happy, as the fish is not swimming.

What's wrong? Well, we soon figure out that we need to feed the fish, since the fish really has nowhere to go. The walls of the bowl are too steep to climb out and go to the grocery store and get some food, so we need to provide for the fish that is in the bowl that we placed in the middle of our world. Perhaps that is what God intends for us to learn, when we place a fish in a bowl on our table. We need to care, we need to learn to care and then actually do the things we need to do, since we too are in a bowl, sitting somewhere in the middle of God's world. God has always told us through his best friends, like Elisha, "Give it to the people to eat. For thus says the Lord, "They shall eat and there shall be some left over!"

God provides. But we are slow learners. And sometimes the fish in the bowl gets very sad and waits and waits and waits as we run by everyday doing our thing, but forget about the fish in the bowl in the middle of our busy world. And the fish dies, and the fish in the bowl, leaves.

But God thinks differently, and he sends his Son, to remind us that we need to feed our fish, in our bowl in the middle of our busy lives. God's Son brought the same message, "Have the people recline. ... Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them ..." and "When they had their fill ... filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments ..." (Mark 6:39)

God amply provides and through God's grace, over fills all our human needs with excess. But our lives are busy and perhaps we need to remind ourselves of that, not unlike the fish in the bowl in the middle our busy world. We are souls in a bowl in the middle of God's world. And God has told us, we are special and he has our bowl set up high on a great table that God feeds every day with the help of his Son Jesus. And like St. Paul said, all God asks is that we "live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with ..." (Ephesians 4:1) All humility, gentleness, patience, love and peace, God will provide. But we still need to feed the fish in the bowl, in the middle of our busy lives and give thanks to God.

May we find the Peace of Christ.

Question and answer

Why should I trust God if he doesn't answer my prayers?



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In Matthew 7: 7-8, Jesus states: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

In Matthew 21: 22, Jesus states: "Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive."

Those who ascribe to the Prosperity Gospel hold God to these "promises". All of us have had experiences when our prayers seemed to go unanswered. Sometimes days, weeks, or even years will go by at a time without an answer. We find ourselves wondering, 'when is God going to answer this prayer?' The important

thing to remember is that God hasn't forgotten about us or abandoned us.

Can we really trust someone who doesn't keep their promises? We've all been hurt in this way and have learned to be on guard, waiting for the "proof in the pudding." And that "proof" is that we receive what we asked for. But God is under no obligation to say "yes" to our every prayer. That's a good thing considering some of the things we ask for!

For all eternity, God has a plan for each of us. He gives us free will to make decisions either with Him or without Him. Obviously, he wants us to make plans with Him, to align our will with His. He knows what is best for us. Often we don't.

Many times we use prayer as a way of getting God to do what we want. We tell God what we want from Him so His will aligns with our will. We must remember that God knows what we want and need before we even ask, but he wants us to ask. God sees the big picture and wants only what is best for us. He gives because He loves. He likewise denies because He loves. Whatever the answer, God has our best interest in mind. We may not even realize God's answer at times.

He may answer "Yes." Other times he may answer "No." He may answer "Yes, but you'll have to wait." He could answer "Yes, but differently from what you expected." He could even answer "Yes, but in addition, here's more!"

This reminds me of my Dad's warning not to eat too many green apples from the tree one fall harvest when I was a "know-it-all" young teen. These were the apples that start to turn brown soon after the first bite. They were a bit sour, but, oh, so good. Needless to say, I didn't heed my Dad's advice. I soon discovered why dad had warned me, but it was too late. My, oh, my! Dad never said it out loud, but I know he was thinking, "I tried to warn you!"

Some lessons in life are only learned the hard way. It is no different with God's warnings. When God said, "Trust me", he meant in all things. He loves us too much to let us have our own way all the time. If He didn't, we would go to Him like we would a credit card with an unlimited spending limit. Can you imagine the trouble we could get ourselves into if that were the case? My, oh, my!

Does God answer our prayers and can we trust Him? The short answer is "Yes!"

Father Keith from front page

destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) Much as we like to frame our political discourse in terms of darkness versus light, the reason this resonates is that there is darkness to avoid. But even more important is the Light, as we follow Jesus we are

aiming for abundance of life. Run away from the darkness but pick up the wounded on the way to the light.

As Saint Paul says in Romans 12:9-12: Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate

one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.

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Depending on the volume received we will pick 1 to 2 questions
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