

Sunday, March 8, 2015 – Jn 2:13-25 – 3rd Sunday of Lent
(Trust Walk - “Endure with me.”)

One definition of endurance is to sustain a prolonged activity. Enduring can be as we move through a positive period of our lives. And, enduring can be as we move through challenging and stressful periods of our lives. Another definition of endurance is...

SCREEN: [Image – Jesus on the cross]

...the example of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that showed us how to endure. He endured in being mocked during his three years of ministry, endured his suffering being persecuted, and endured as he was nailed to the cross to die for us. There is no need to look any farther for defining endurance than in the example of Jesus Christ.

SCREEN: Trust Walk [main message screen]

We are in our third week of our Lenten message series called *Trust Walk*. We are reflecting during these 40 days of Lent that our Lord is calling us to walk with him in trust. A *Trust Walk* with our Lord is trusting him to lead us where we are meant to go. We reflected the past two weeks on that Christ asks us to *walk with him* and to *trust in him*. This week, we are reflecting on that Christ asks us to...

SCREEN: Endure with me!

Endure with him! That in our *Trust Walk* with Christ, we reach out to him to help us endure in our journey of faith throughout this life, in order to help lead us to the life to come. To help us endure in all the positive periods of our lives. And, to help us endure in all the challenging and stressful periods of our lives. Today, I want you to reflect on the question, ‘what do you seek out in your life to help you endure?’

Probably most of us here has their ‘go to’ place when we are looking for help to endure, whether it is to just get through daily life, or to get through a tough situation or stressful time. For many people, this might be words of inspiration that energizes you, or exercising to get rid of the stress, or eating a pint of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream. However, for us as Christians, we should always first look to our faith and our belief in Jesus Christ to find that help to endure. We may look to a particular verse or verses of Scripture that seems to reach us personally, and that can give us strength from Christ -- strength in order to endure in our journey of faith and in our journey of life.

I have two 'go to' verses of Holy Scripture I go to often. The first is from Matthew 19:26 which says...

SCREEN: [Image – *With God all things are possible.*]

...*With God all things are possible.* This verse is written on this battery operated candle that my sister gave to me when my family got together for dinner in the summer of 2006 to celebrate my entering seminary. And, I keep this candle next to two dried out roses. A red rose that was from my mom's funeral, and a white rose that was from my dad's funeral. This is my first 'go to' Scripture verse because it reminds me of the precious gift God gave me through my parents giving me life, and I know by their example of faith that they, along with Christ, give me strength to endure.

My second 'go to' verse of Holy Scripture is from Philippians 4:13, which says...

SCREEN: [Image – *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*]

...*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* This verse is etched into this stone cross. This cross was given to me by a parish family when I was going through my surgeries. I kept this cross in view and read the verse often during the countless hours of rehabilitation and physical therapy. It reminds me of the cross

on which Jesus was nailed and knowing what he endured for us so that we might live this life, whatever that might be. This stone cross now sits on my desk and continues to remind me that through Christ's strength I have gotten to this point in my life, and that I can always endure because of him. So, again I ask you to reflect on the question, 'what do you seek out in your life to help you endure?'

Scripture can always give us help in how we endure with Christ. And, today's Scripture readings can help us. Today's readings cover a vast period of time, from the time of Moses through to the time of St. Paul after Christ's resurrection. The first reading from the Old Testament Book of Exodus gives us the Ten Commandments. Commandments that were given to us by God over 3,500 years ago and that have stood the test of time. Commandments that became the foundation of not just the law of religion, but became and continue to be the foundational law of civil governments throughout the world. These Commandments teach us how to live. And, when we live our lives living up to what God has given us in how to live, we are lead to a life of fulfillment, and a life of true lasting happiness. For instance, the Commandment *keep holy the Sabbath day*. When we are fed by the Word of God and receive the precious Body and Blood of Christ, we are given the spiritual strength and nourishment to live out our faith. When we violate this law, it effects everything in our lives. I remember my

early college years at the University of Maryland. I think I was a good kid, but there were some Sundays I could come up with what seemed to me to be a reasonable excuse to miss Mass. However, when I missed Mass, it always effected my entire week. As I got smarter, when I stayed true to living out the Commandment to *keep holy the Sabbath day* and got myself to Mass every weekend, it gave me the nourishment I needed in order to more fully be able to live my faith. Living up to the Commandments brings us true happiness, peace, and order to our lives. Most of all, they nourish our relationship with our Lord and help lead us on our journey towards our salvation.

Today's Gospel we heard from John is one of my favorite passage. I like it because it shows that Jesus got mad – really mad. It showed a side of his humanity that we see rarely in the Gospels. It connects with our humanity. And, I think we all relate with a moment like Jesus was experiencing. A moment when you try so hard to help someone or teach someone the right thing to do, but they just keep going down the wrong or destructive path. You get so mad you just want them to see the wrong of their ways. You want them to experience the fulfillment and happiness and love you experience because of your relationship with Christ. Jesus had reached in that moment in the Temple a boiling point because of what was happening in his Father's house. The Temple was the place to worship God, but it

had become less about God, and more about the things of the secular world. Jesus was reminding the Pharisees, Scribes and worshippers that their zeal was misplaced, and their zeal for the secular world was consuming them. I think we should ask ourselves from time to time the same question. ‘Does our zeal, or our passion, energy, commitment, and endurance, get misplaced for the things of this secular world instead of where it should be focused – focused on living a life centered on Christ?’

Focused on a living a life centered on Christ. That is what Lent is supposed to help us do – to focus on the importance of Jesus Christ in our life and in our *Trust Walk* with him. As mentioned last week, the Take-Away for our Lenten message series is this Stations of the Cross booklet. This booklet contains reflections from 14 parishioners, along with prayers, for the 14 Stations of the Cross. Last Thursday during the snow storm, we got one of those rare moments when the world outside was hushed and there was a beautiful sense of peace. I sat in the empty church that morning and prayed with these Stations of the Cross. If you haven’t prayed them yet, or haven’t picked up a copy from the tables at the entrance to the church, do so. Take time to pray these Stations of the Cross. You will be so moved by the reflections written by our parishioners. Their words, and the recalling of Jesus’

passion through the Stations, truly reminds us where our focus needs to be during Lent, as well as during our entire life in our journey of faith.

To also help us reflect on where we are focusing our life right now, I want you to think about how you would answer the following questions right now about your faith and where you are in life:

1. Would you describe your faith right now as on fire, lukewarm, or cold?
2. When it comes to weekly worship, are you committed (you are at Mass no matter what), lazy (if you get there, you get there), or absent (rarely go to Mass)?
3. Is your prayer life regular, on again/off again, or just lacking?
4. When you are given the opportunity to share your faith, do you respond, or do you let the opportunity pass by?

In my college years, my faith was lukewarm, I was lazy about getting to Mass, my prayer life was lacking, and I did not seek many opportunities to share my faith. I convinced myself that I was a ‘good person’ and that can make up for all those things that are lacking. Thankfully my parents instilled a foundation of the faith in me, that when the appeal of the secular world became not quite what I thought it

was, I embraced the loving arms of Christ, remembering our life is to live in a *Trust Walk* with him, day in, and day out.

As Christians, we make this *Trust Walk* with Christ because, as the 2nd reading today from St. Paul reminds us,...

SCREEN: “We proclaim Christ crucified”

“We proclaim Christ crucified.” This is the foundation of our Christian faith.

This is why we pray the Stations of the Cross. This is why we reflect on the final days of Jesus’ ministry leading up to his Passion. This is why the ashes are placed on our foreheads to remind us of the very nature of our lives – of where we came from, and of where we are hoping to go. This is why at the end of Lent we enter the Triduum celebrating the Last Supper; recalling the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ; and then celebrate his resurrection. *We proclaim Christ crucified* because that was the ultimate act of love that God, our Father, gave to us, His beloved children. He loved us so much that he sacrificed his own son.

There is no doubt life is a roller coaster. We have periods of time when everything is going our way and we in a period of happiness. And, there are times that are tough, when we are thrown a curve ball, and we find ourselves unsure of what will

occur next in our life. We need, more now than ever, to seek a life walking with Christ – trusting in Christ. We need this to endure our passage through this life, in good times, and in bad. We need this to endure with Christ in order to lead us to the true fulfillment and true happiness that God wants for each of us.

I finish this morning with the image...

SCREEN: [Image – Jesus on the cross]

...I started with of Christ crucified. I do so because despite this image being one of suffering and pain, it is one of amazing love. It shows us that because of what Christ was able to endure, we too can endure with him. We can continue on our *Trust Walk* with Christ assured he will always be walking with us – if – we seek to walk with him. As you continue your Lenten journey, each day strive to take that walk. If you do, then *[you] can do everything through Christ who gives [you] strength*. If you do, then *with God all things are possible* in your life. Amen.