

Second Hand Preacher

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 16, 2017

Romans 8:18-23

Five years ago I suffered from a nerve disorder called Guillain-Barré Syndrome. It was debilitating and at times very painful. In trying to find a happy medium with pain medication, I had a small amount of suffering. Even though it was difficult at the time, I tried to view it as redemptive suffering. I did it for the people of my parish and my wonderful family. I suffered in hopes I would be able to get back to normal. The road back was long, but it is typical with this illness that one gets better. I learned what it was like to have a disability and to suffer. I was also able to be back at close to 100%. Being sick was a real reflective time. I had learned about redemptive suffering; that we could take our suffering and link our pain to the cross of Christ. We need to take time to ponder how much Jesus suffered for us. His pain is our gain.

St. Paul wants the Christians of Rome to know that their suffering is not in vain. He wants to comfort them with the notion that they will be rewarded for the risk they are taking by practicing their faith. Jesus died for them and now some of them may have to die in the name of Jesus. I'm sure being the object of cruel sport would be most unnerving, but if they can trust in the Creator of the world, they can be in union with his only Son. The Romans were a strong community of faith and were an example of how Christians were to sacrifice for one another. I have admiration for those who met their death well when they were thrown to lions or met other forms of persecution. This letter was to help them realize that their redeemer lives.

What are we willing to risk to practice our faith? Sometimes I feel my generation and younger feel they are doing the older generation a favor by caring about Church or making sure they can go to Church or have a Church funeral. Can we be a Christian even if the task is not easy? Are we willing to go to any length to follow Jesus or do we ignore the fact we need to, at a minimum, participate in mass each and every week? Do we pray when things are good and when we are in trouble? When we are in trouble, do we turn to God first? Can we see suffering, discomfort, or even tragedy as the sacrifice we make to be connected to an all loving God? These are tough questions we need to take to prayer. Even when things look their worst, God is always there.