



THE MISSION OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Father Alan's Blog

For the Ninth Sunday After Trinity - August 1, 2021

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

One Sunday morning during Holy Communion, a young Anglican priest, as part of his sermon, thought he would take the opportunity to review the Catechism with some of the teenagers who were currently being prepared for Confirmation by the bishop on his next episcopal visit to the parish. Specifically, the priest asked the confirmands, who were seated in one of the front pews, to quote a verse from Holy Scripture for each of the seven sacraments.

For "Holy Baptism", one teen suggested:

"St. John 3:5 - 'Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'"

For "Penance", another young person offered:

"St. James 5:16a - 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.'"

"Very good,"

said the priest,

"Now, can anyone give me a verse about 'Marriage'?"

A long pause ensued, following which one youth cautiously
"volunteered":

"St. Luke 23:34a - 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"



Today is the Ninth Sunday After "Trinity" - a season of the Church Year for which the theme is: "Living and Growing in the Holy Spirit", as Saint Paul so eloquently encourages us in today's Epistle Lesson from 1 Corinthians 10:31:

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Or as one little girl so aptly put it in her version of the 23rd Psalm:

"The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want."

In addition, as I have said many times before, one of my favourite verses in all of Holy Scripture is Isaiah 11:6d:

"And a little child will lead them."

Consequently, it should come as no surprise that throughout my ministry, I have learned a great deal about "living and growing in the Holy Spirit" from children and young people.

Two cases in point:

I remember once hearing on the radio about two young boys who lived in Toronto. Their mother, not wanting them to waste their summer by sitting around all day, challenged them to do something that would help others out.

The boys thought about it for a while and noticed that the previous year at school a number of their classmates didn't have proper school supplies, let alone something to carry them in. (Many children were forced to use plastic grocery bags which ripped and spilled their contents when too many books were placed in them.) So, the boys decided that they would try to gather as many backpacks as they could find and fill them with school supplies. With minimal help from their mom, these two boys wrote – **in their own words** – to several companies, outlining the problems faced by some of their classmates and then asking for donations.

- ✎ **Wal-Mart donated 1,000 backpacks.**
- ✎ **Hilroy, Staples/Business Depot, and other retailers donated school supplies.**
- ✎ **A clothing supplier donated socks, underwear, and t-shirts.**

The boys' home (much to their mother's chagrin) looked like an assembly line, as they worked daily, filling backpacks, and delivering them to their local foodbank for distribution. The boys enclosed a note in each backpack, asking the recipient to pass along to a friend any articles that the recipient couldn't use. And to top it all off, the boys planned to do this all again the following summer – only they wanted to get more of their friends involved, so that they could fill even more backpacks.

"Kids shouldn't have to go to school without the things they need,"

the boys were quoted as saying,

"It isn't right."



Shortly after arriving at my first pastoral charge in Thunder Bay, ON in late July 2000 my family and I drove to the outskirts of town to see the Terry Fox Monument, set high up on an escarpment to the side of Highway 11/17. Admittedly, it had been some time since I had last thought about Terry Fox. But seeing his 9-foot bronze image with his jaw set and determined westward gaze instantly took me back to that amazing spring and summer only 20 years before.

Terry Fox left St. John's, NL on April 12th, 1980, after dipping his artificial leg in the Atlantic Ocean and proceeded to unite Canadians in a way never before – nor since – seen. For almost five months, every day, rain or shine, Terry Fox ran the average of a 26-mile (42-kilometre) marathon, in the process enduring:

- 👁️ **unimaginable pain and fatigue from the massive scabs on his leg stump that never healed; and**
- 👁️ **impossibly short recovery times.**

Through five Canadian provinces (and most of a sixth), Terry ran 3,339 miles (5,373 kilometres) in 143 days, before being forced to stop outside of Thunder Bay on September 1, 1980, due to a reoccurrence of the cancer that three years before had taken most of Terry's right leg, amputated six inches above the knee. This time, though, the cancer was in his lungs. Still, Terry vowed not to give up. However, the unrelenting cancer – unchecked by vigorous treatment – spread, and Terry died on June 28, 1991, one month shy of his 23rd birthday.

Why did Terry Fox run?

Apparently, while in hospital in March 1977 to have his right leg amputated, Terry, then only 18 years old, was deeply moved by the

suffering he witnessed there. Furthermore, the night before his amputation, Terry read about an amputee runner, and he vowed to run across Canada to raise badly needed money for cancer research. As a result, only two years later, beginning in February 1979, Terry began training for his “Marathon of Hope”, running a total of 5,000 kilometers in the process. By April of the next year, 1980, he was ready.

Terry had hoped to raise the once unimaginable total of \$24 million for cancer research – one dollar for every Canadian man, woman, and child in 1980. He succeeded in February 1981 – a mere five months after his Marathon of Hope had ended and only four months before his untimely death. Since then, the Annual Terry Fox Run has raised a further \$850 million in almost 60 countries worldwide.

Terry Fox received many awards. For example, prior to his death:

- 🏅 **he became the youngest Companion of the Order of Canada;**
- 🏅 **he was named a Person of National Historic Significance by the Government of Canada;**
- 🏅 **he received BC’s Order of the Dogwood;**
- 🏅 **he was named Canadian of the Year for 1980; and**
- 🏅 **he was awarded the 1980 Lou Marsh Trophy as Canada’s athlete of the year.**

And following his death:

- 🏅 **he was inducted into Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame in 1981;**
- 🏅 **he was named Canadian of the Year for 1981; and**
- 🏅 **he has had many schools, institutions, and landmarks named in his honour.**

Yet, while he was alive, Terry (displaying his trademark humility) never understood why people were making such a fuss about him or his accomplishments. He was just doing what he felt needed to be

done. In short, Terry Fox suffered so that others might live. He literally poured himself out on the highways of our country for people he would never meet because the thought of others suffering was more than he could bear.



God feels the same way about His people. For in this life, we all suffer in some way. But mostly, because of our sins and wickedness, we suffer from the sentence of death and eternal separation from God. However, like a good Father, God loves all His children – **even those who don't know Him**. He has seen all our suffering and has done something about it: (to paraphrase Jesus' own words in St. John 3:16), **God sent His only Son into this world, to pour Himself out for us and for our sins, so that we could be reunited with our Father in heaven forever.**

Therefore, after all that God has done for us, what could we possibly do for Him in return? To be blunt, there's nothing, really. Regardless of our actions, God still loves each of us the same. So, since we really can't buy God's favour, why bother to even try? Well, how are these for starters:

- ✠ **We bother as an honest outpouring of love and gratitude for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.**
- ✠ **We love because God loved us first.**
- ✠ **And we give because God gave to us first.**

Thus, we are beckoned by God to obey and to live out, in unrestrained joy, His two "Great Commandments":

- ✠ **love Him; and**
- ✠ **love neighbour.**

Therefore, as Christians, we are called, first and foremost, **to serve**, for we have all been given specific gifts and talents, and – as “saved servants” of our Lord Jesus Christ – we are called to put these gifts and talents to good use in helping to spread God’s Kingdom on earth. (As a result, one of my Divinely appointed tasks is to be an “enabler”, helping people to get in touch with their God-given spiritual gifts and talents and to get on with their own ministries. For we all have a ministry to perform, and on the soon-to-arrive “Day of the Lord”, we will all be asked to give an accounting of what we did with what we were each given. I, for one, certainly don’t want to stand before Jesus on that day and have to explain to Him why I didn’t do my job – like why, for instance, I didn’t equip His people to labour in His vineyard. I want to do the best job I can for Jesus while I still have time.)



Decidedly unlike the unscrupulous – yet shrewd – steward in the Gospel Lesson for today (“The Ninth Sunday After Trinity”), from St. Luke 16:1-10 and the faithless Israelites wandering in the wilderness in today’s Epistle Lesson from 1 Corinthians 10:1-17. By lessening the debts owed by various people to his master, the steward hoped to secure his earthly prosperity and comfort. Meanwhile, the wilderness-wandering Israelites – despite the miracles that God had performed in leading them out of bondage in Egypt through the Red Sea and meeting their physical needs in the desert – when push came to shove, they developed a most ungrateful “So, what have you done for me lately?” attitude, sought their own physical comforts, and worshipped other Gods. By their actions, both the steward and the Israelites in the wilderness, in effect, turned their backs on God by taking their eyes off the Source of Life and turning them inward toward self. In so doing, they became idolaters and worshipped other gods, like popularity and physical gratification; hence, in their pursuit of a comfortable life on earth – to the detriment of all else – both the

steward and the Israelites in the wilderness condemned themselves to eternal damnation. Instead of responding in love to the love they had already received, they chose self instead – and they paid dearly for it.



We would do well to learn from the extremely poor examples shown by the unscrupulous steward and by the faithless Israelites in the wilderness, for due to:

- ☞ **our apathetic inactivity as Christians;**
- ☞ **our failure to answer our individual callings; and**
- ☞ **our willingness to sit back on our collective haunches and let the “world, the flesh, and the devil” have its way,**

much has, tragically, already been lost.

Consequently, we would do very well let “a little child lead us”, by:

- ✚ **seeking to emulate the noble examples of Terry Fox and the two young male Torontonians;**
- ✚ **looking to Jesus Christ – and Him alone;**
- ✚ **boldly speaking Jesus’ Name;**
- ✚ **serving all others that He so graciously sends our way; and**
- ✚ **worshipping regularly in His Church,**

there to receive, as one body, His most precious Body and Blood, empowering us to reach out in love and to serve others in response to not only what God has done for us, but also the suffering that we see all around us. And when all is said and done, we can all take comfort in knowing that we have each faithfully done whatever He asked of us, because:

“The Lord is my shepherd, that’s all I want.”



Dearest Reader in Christ:

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