

Sermon: January 22, 2023

**"Baptismal certificate?"**

So, what is in your heart today? What are you thinking about? ... who are you praying for?  
I'm standing in the front parking lot this morning ... watching the light traffic go back and forth on LaGrange Road. Where is everyone going? Are they having a good day? bad day? just an ordinary one?  
How about you ... as you walk in the door this morning?  
Your joys ... your sorrows ... successes ... failures ----- "stuff" ...???

I've thought a lot about the "serenity prayer" this week .... can't get it out of my head!!  
I so much want to be able to ACCEPT what I cannot change ... and, at the same time, have the COURAGE to change what I can. To be sure ---- we live in a complicated world. In fact, even so-called ordinary things can be complicated. Getting our prescription filled. Talking personally to a doctor. Ordering something ... but you can only do it on-line.  
I so much want our church and our message to be simple ----- easy to grasp, easy to understand.

Got a call from another parish the other day.  
One of our former church members is to be a God-parent at a baptism at their church. They want proof that he is baptized. Really???  
She asks: "Was John baptized at your church?"  
"Let me check our records." I ask Kathy to look it up ---- there it is: a record of him being baptized.  
"Yes, he was baptized here."  
"Well ... he doesn't know where his baptismal certificate is ... can you send it to me?"  
"I don't have a certificate ... but he was baptized here ... it's right here in our records. Isn't that good enough?"  
"No. I need a copy of the certificate."  
"I don't have one. But you have my word. I'm a minister ... I baptized John. What's the problem."  
"I need proof."  
"Since when isn't a preacher's word good enough? It's sad when you can't simply trust my word."  
I sent them a fake certificate.

I think of the serenity prayer. Don ---- there are some things you just can't change.  
Serenity is an "inside job." It's about the heart ... it's about the soul. It's about the way we look at the world. Knowing we are not alone. Knowing that we matter ... and we need to help others know THEY MATTER. It's easy ... in life ... to lose touch. We can lose touch with ourselves. We can lose touch with others. I'm sure we all have people to whom we were very close ... but then, somehow ----we lose touch. Our paths go in different directions ... and maybe we don't even know where they are.

TOM. He and his wife were always here. I officiated her funeral a few years ago. Tom was living with Alzheimer's ... we lost touch. Well ---- his son emailed the church: "is Pastor Don still there??"  
He led me to his dad. Tom is in memory care at Hines VA Hospital . He may not know you. That's OK ... I know him, and I need to see him.  
He's in a section of the hospital called "Serenity Place." Tom is asleep. His room is amazingly clean. Music in the background. Family pictures on the table.  
He is at peace. I feel at peace. The quiet spirit of re-connecting.

EDDIE. He and his family were so much a part of our church for a long time. Our paths go in different directions. But by the grace of God ... we have re-connected. Eddie died unexpectedly yesterday morning. We all hold hands and pray at his bedside. Eddie ----- such a leader and mentor in the family of AA.

The “serenity prayer” is at the heart and soul of who they are.  
Re-connecting. The gift of peace.

Remember last Sunday? ... I’m worried about the number of bingo players we had signed up for  
Friday night. Shame on me!@!! ---- getting hung-up on how much and how many.

Well ... we had over 80 people. The last game is a cover-all ... a \$200 pot: big time for us!!  
One of you brings your mom. Your mom wins the pot. One of our men’s club guys hands her the  
\$200 ..... she quietly gives it back.

“You don’t have to do that.”

“I know, but I want to. I know what this church means to my family.”

Friday a lady comes in the front door. A huge gift basket ... she is crying as she hands it to me.

Are you OK???

“I remember how generous you all were for my brother, whose wife has stage-4 cancer. You dedicated a  
bingo to them. Shortly after that our mom died ... you visited her. This is for your auction coming up ----  
to say “thank-you” and in memory of my mom.”

Wow.

Our world is complicated, to be sure.

Our lives can be complicated.

We probably live, more than we should, in a “how much” and “how many” world.

Jesus was simple. He planted small seeds.

That message of simplicity and the quiet power of small seeds ---- this can help us  
wend our way through our unpredictable journey.

There is a sometimes elusive gift lurking and living inside each one of us ...

it’s called SERENITY.

Serenity is quiet and humble.

It grows out of weakness, and gives us the strength to get through whatever comes our way.

“For everything there is a season.”

So grateful God is with us through all the seasons of our lives.

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