



For a good while, **I have heard a little heart whisper, as if the good Lord is telling me that by giving me a small problem/misery, He is in reality solving a bigger problem, that He is healing a bigger misery.**

He heals this way. He shows us the Father's loving care by giving us challenges, so we will grow stronger in the spiritual life. We can think ourselves very virtuous, but, in my experience, acceptance of divine graces precedes growth in virtue. The graces needed for the formidable task of evangelizing the culture are continuously flowing from the Crucified One; indeed, He is waiting to live ever more deeply in our hearts and in the hearts of those we meet.

I meander a bit. Of course, there is a deeply personal story behind my thoughts and prayers, a story best left to percolate longer in that hidden place where Jesus speaks and dwells, where He informs and guides.

I am writing this reflection shortly upon return from morning Mass, and the Gospel today has always mystified me. Well, until today. The apostles ask our Lord why He speaks to the crowds in parables, and his explanation is an expression of his love for fallen humankind. He will not only go to any extreme to save us, He also will chip away at our hardened hearts in the most subtle, small and creative ways.

That is the secret of this Gospel. He truly wills that none shall perish. Many of us are in the thick of raising our families. Many of us have teens and young adults swimming in the treacherous cultural waters of high school and college life. Our blessed Lord is exhorting us to creative approaches to engaging culture, especially the youth.

Tell stories. Go shopping. Eat sushi. Play a video game. Have fun with them and their friends. Tell them what you like about their friends, especially the ones that have things about them you do not like. Meet them at their "happy place." Before you know it, a conversation is happening that is more than meets the eye. Above all, give them to the Holy Family in prayer.

As I drove home from Mass, I praised the Lord for His simplicity and wisdom and spoke aloud to Him, “dear Jesus, all your ways are really one Way, the Way of Vulnerability and Mercy.”

Another phrase that has been hitting me lately is that we ought to be “landing pad parents” with “helicopter kids/young people,” which I take to signify that the Lord’s Way is to be that safe, positive, happy and holy refuge for our young people, a place where they can land; and, we can be vulnerable together...then, they helicopter up and out and work out their salvation in holy fear and trembling. So many parents are afraid of sins, mistakes, the greater sinful culture, etc...that Christian young people face the enemies of the soul crippled by a lack of appropriate self confidence.

Without going in to the details of my current small misery, I will say that it has to do with a rather gross health problem I have, which has increased my Knowledge of God’s Mercy and Love for me, his beloved daughter. God wants us secure in His Love, which does not depend on having the perfect material circumstances. Wisdom is a Gift of the Holy Spirit; and, many young saints have been aflame with this Gift. Many of our own daughters and sons, nieces and nephews, friends and neighbors are just a little love and grace away from being the young saints that today’s hurting culture thirsts to know.

Later in today’s Gospel, our Lord himself assures us of the value of spiritual riches, riches that only come through deepening, personal relationships. In verse 12, he exhorts that **“anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich...”**

The stakes are very high. Eternity is not on everyone’s “radar” these days. By asking someone to lunch or spending some fun, recreational time with someone; and, also, by telling jokes or stories and engaging their hearts –by such simple and straightforward means—we will, through our dear Jesus, be instruments of saving grace. We will gain trust and go deeper in to the conversation everyone really wants to have, the conversation about God’s Love for sinners.

I was not going to bring our Holy Father in to this, but I do so relate to his sanguine temperament, as I share that with him. We sanguines can really be so outgoing, wear our emotions on our sleeves and more somewhat annoying traits (we annoy ourselves, just so you know, including blathering on as experts in areas we know little about –ask my family how I am the queen of that one!) We are very affectionate and accepting, to some, it may seem to a fault.

Look at our times. Look and see how confused and demeaned people are for lack of real love, for lack of understanding God’s Mercy. Hang the lurking economic and political crises, as what we ought to focus on is our identity crisis. We are all of us beloved children of God. **Only Christ can heal what divides us from our true selves.** Let us be a font of continuous blessing upon our little worlds. **Let us beg the Precious Blood of**

**Christ upon our every thought, word and deed.**

“JMJ, pray for us! Amen. Alleluia!”