

THANKSGIVING 2008

I WAS WALKING AROUND OSBORN PARK A WHILE BACK

AND I BEGAN TO ASK MYSELF

“WHY ME”?

AS IN, WHY HAVE I HAD THIS WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PRIEST?

WHY DO I HAVE SUCH A GOOD FAMILY AND FRIENDS

WHO HAVE BEEN THERE FOR ME

SUPPORTING ME IN MY HARDEST TIMES?

WHY DID MY RECENT EYE SURGERIES WORK OUT SO WELL.

I HAVE PARISHIONERS AND FRIENDS

FOR WHOM LIFE HAS BEEN VERY HARD.

THERE ARE GOOD PEOPLE

WHOSE FAMILY SITUATIONS ARE BATTLE FRONTS

AND EXCELLENT PARENTS WHOSE KIDS SEEMED

DETERMINED TO GET INTO TROUBLE.

EVER WONDER,

“WHY ARE THE GOOD THINGS HAPPENING TO ME,

AND WHY DON'T I THANK GOD MORE FOR IT”?

“IT IS NOT NORMAL FOR MOST AMERICANS,” SAID ONE MAN.

“WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE PROGRESS IS A GIVEN,

WHERE WE EXPECT GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN.

USUALLY WE ONLY THINK OF GOD

WHEN SOMETHING DOESN'T GO OUR WAY”

OUR RECENT ECONOMIC CRUNCH

IS THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF THAT ATTITUDE.

I AM GUILTY OF THAT.

THIS SAME MAN SAID IT THIS WAY

“WE THINK OUR COUNTRY IS ABOUT CHOICE”

BUT WE REALLY TURN IT INTO BLAME.”

IF WE MAKE A CHOICE AND IT GOES BAD,

TOO OFTEN,

WE BLAME GOD.”

“OUR FIRST INSTINCT IS, “IT IS NOT MY FAULT”.

AND FOR THIS, I AM GUILTY AGAIN.

FOR A LONG TIME

I OFTEN MISSED THE BASICS.

FOR EXAMPLE, I CAN COUNT ON ONE HAND

HOW OFTEN I HAVE THANKED GOD

FOR BEING BORN IN AMERICA.

NOW, LIVING WITH DEACON KISHORE,

I AM MADE AWARE OF WHAT I HAVE RECEIVED.

AS HE SHARES HIS STORIES JUST ABOUT ANYTHING

ONE EXAMPLE IS HOW HE USED TO TRAVEL TO WORK

HANGING ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE TRAIN

BECAUSE THE TRAIN WAS PACKED

AND EVERYONE JUST DID IT.

AND I TAKE COMFORTABLE TRAVEL AS A GIVEN.
FR. TIM KUMMER, A PRIEST AND FRIEND IN DEFINACE,
WHOM I TAUGHT WAY BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL
SPENT TIME IN OUR MISSION IN ZIMBAMWE.
HE SHARED WITH ME HOW SHOCKED HE WAS COMING BACK HOME
AND GOING TO THE KROGER STORE.
HE SAID, I STOOD THERE LOOKING AT SOAPS
REMEMBERING HOW I HAD TO STAND IN LINE
FOR HOURS,
TO TRY TO BUY A BAR OF SOAP,
AND THERE BEFORE ME WAS THIS SEA OF SOAP.
HE ASKED ME, PHIL DO YOU KNOW
HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN BUY DIAL SOAP?
HE COUNTED THEM, 29
HE IS TOO POLITE TO TELL US
THAT WE NEED A COLLECTIVE TRANSPLANT
OF A GRATEFUL HEART,
BUT YOU CAN SEE IT IN HIS EYES.
WE DO NOT GET IT, "HOW GOOD WE HAVE IT".
AND WE CAN DWELL ON THE BAD.
TIM SAID THAT WE LIKE TO KEEP SCORE,
AND WE COOK THE BOOKS
TO CREATE A SELF-SERVING STEW.

WE THINK, "I DID THIS GOOD THING,
AND GOD SHOULD BLESS ME FOR IT"
WE REMEMBER THE GOOD THINGS WE DO,
AND EITHER FORGET
OR IGNORE THE POOR DECISIONS.
THEN IT SOMEHOW BECOMES GOD'S FAULT
WHEN THINGS GO WRONG.
HAVE YOU NOTICE THAT IT IS A LOT EASIER TO PRAY INTENSELY
WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG
THAN WHEN IT GOES RIGHT.?
WE HAVE TO TEACH OURSELVES TO BE GRATEFUL.
ONE MAN SHARED WITH ME HOW HIS FATHER
WOULD ALWAYS GO TO SATURDAY 5 P.M MASS
AT 4:30.
IT WAS LIKE CLOCK WORK.
WHEN THE SON WOULD CALL HIS FATHER UP
TO JOIN HIM FOR MASS
HIS DAD WOULD SAY I WILL PICK YOU UP AT 4:15
SO WE CAN GET THERE BY 4:30.
THE SON CONFESSED THAT ALTHOUGH HE WONDERED
WHY DID GOT THERE SO EARLY,
HE NEVER ASKED HIM THE REASON.
AT HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL MASS HE FOUND OUT WHY.

THE PRIEST SHARED IN HOMILY THAT ONE SATURDAY

HE DID GO BACK AND ASK HIM,

WHY DO YOU COME EACH WEEK AT 4:30.

THE MAN RESPONDED

“FATHER, I HAVE SO MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR

THAT I COULD NOT GET THROUGH THE LIST

WITHOUT COMING THIS EARLY

TO THANK HIM”

TODAY WE GATHER TO REMEMBER AND TO THINK

ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT WE SHOULD THANK GOD FOR.

IT TAKES PRACTICE.

NOT EVERYTHING GOES RIGHT.

NOT EVERYONE TODAY WILL FEEL BLESSED

BAD THINGS DO HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE,

AND NOT ALL SUFFERING HAS A REASON BEHIND IT

THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND.

BUT WHEN WE GET REAL WITH GOD,

AND REALLY LOOK AT WHO WE ARE

AND WHAT WE HAVE,

MOST OF US REALLY DO HAVE

SO MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR.

IT IS GOOD THAT WE COME

TO REMIND OURSELVES AND TO TELL HIM THANK YOU.

