

Your Favorite Page

The British had an organization that Americans are now considering adopting. It seems that in England, they had a men's club, Bachelors' Anonymous. It was highly successful in making men fear or even hate marriage. The club provided a unique way to treat the problem of bachelors wanting to marry. They send over a mother-in-law in nightgown, hair curlers and a mud pack.

Judy rushed in to see her doctor, looking very much worried and all strung out. She rattles off, "Doctor, take a look at me. When I woke up this morning, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my hair all wiry and frazzled up, my skin was all wrinkled and pasty, my eyes were bloodshot and bugging out and I had this corpse-like look on my face! What's wrong with me, Doctor?" The doctor looks her over for a couple of moments, then calmly says, "Well, I can tell you that there ain't nothing wrong with your eyesight."

We've all been passed by motorists on the road going much faster than we were. But you can imagine my shock at recently being passed by a speeding lady going down the middle of the road's dotted line at a truly breakneck speed (at least 100 mph, on only a two lane road)!

You can imagine my relief when I passed her later on down the road parked in front of a car with whirling lights. Their conversation went something like this...

"License and Registration please," the officer asked.

"It's okay, Officer, I have a special license that allows me to do this," said the lady, smiling.

"Yeah, right!" he replied, "I've never heard of such a license."

The lady reached into her purse and handed him her license.

"Just as I suspected," the officer said, "this is an ordinary license and I see nothing here that would allow you special consideration."

But the lady, still smiling, pointed to the bottom of the license.

"See? It says so right here: 'Tear Along The Dotted Line.'"

I served in a parachute regiment. During a nighttime exercise, I was seated next to a young officer. He was looking a bit pale, so I asked, "Scared, lieutenant?"

"No," he replied. "Apprehensive."

"What's the difference?"

"That means I'm scared, but with a university education."

An elderly woman had just returned to her home from an evening worship service and was startled to find an intruder in her house.

Catching the man in the act of burglarizing her home, she yelled, "STOP! Acts 2:38!" ("Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.")

As the burglar stopped dead in his tracks, the woman calmly called the police and explained what she had done. Shortly, several officers arrived and took the man into custody.

As he was placing the handcuffs on the burglar, one of the officers asked, "Why did you just stand there? All the lady did was mention a scripture verse."

"Scripture?" replied the burglar. "She said she had an axe and two .38s!"

At a recent software engineering management course in the US, the participants were given an awkward question to answer. "If you had just boarded an airliner and discovered that your team of programmers had been responsible for the flight control software, how many of you would disembark immediately?" Among the ensuing forest of raised hands, only one man sat motionless. When asked what he would do, he replied that he would be quite content to stay onboard. With his team's software, he said, the plane was unlikely to even taxi as far as the runway, let alone take off.

Chuck Norris sleeps with a nightlight ... not because he's afraid of the dark, but the dark is afraid of Chuck Norris.

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Dear Hearts and Gentle People,

As I told the folks in my homily this morning, this is an exciting day! #1, it's Friday and I don't have anything to do 'til Saturday 4:00 p.m. Mass ... other than finalize the homily, of course. #2, we're looking at 5-6 days of warm sunny weather!!! God is good!!!

God was also good in giving us a new Pope and in giving Benedict the courage and grace to resign. That was a bold move and will have a lasting change on the papacy. I pray for Benedict's happiness as he enters into his little monastery for solitude and reflection ... and I hope we hear from him. His writings and talks were very good. Pope Francis has certainly been an interesting change of style and I pray also for him as he possibly leads the Church in new directions. I think every one of us is going to have to be prepared for change ... there will be resistance from the right, the left and from the middle too.

God, through Jesus and the Spirit, continues to breathe new life into Holy Cross also. Three men were ordained to the priest-

hood the Saturday after Easter (April 6th): Rev. Brian Ching, C.S.C., Rev. Mark DeMott, C.S.C., and Rev. Jarrod Waugh, C.S.C.

On Sept. 7, Adam Booth, C.S.C., and Patrick Reidy, C.S.C., will make their Final Vows and the next day be ordained to the diaconate.

At this time, there are seven men at the novitiate considering First Vows. Their petitions will have to be approved by the novitiate staff and the Provincial Council. Thirteen men have already been approved for entering the novitiate in August.

Twenty-two Holy Cross Religious will be honored during the Jubilee Thanksgiving Mass on May 24, 2013, at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. One of the jubilarians will be Fr. Ted Hesburgh, C.S.C., who will celebrate 70 years of priesthood. On a lighter note, there are three men celebrating their 25th and I remember when they were "kids" (i.e. seminarians). Ay-yi-yi!!! I could be their Dad!!!

And then there is the ultimate transition we must all endure: our birth into eternal life. That moment came on February 28 for Fr. John F. Kurtzke, C.S.C. and on April 8 for Rev. George Kahle, C.S.C. Both men spent their ministry as educators: John at the university level and George in high school.

The inside pages contain a reflection on fear. I may have done a reflection on this topic in the recent past, but it just seems to me that it is something that needs to be looked at again so it does not overcome us. More and more we need to hear the words of Jesus, "Do not be afraid."

Finally, on the personal side, it's been a time of transition for the Yost Family. Dad's short-term memory is getting increasingly worse. In March, Mom had a bad fall at home which resulted in broken bones and hospitalization. They have now moved into assisted living near my sister's home in Atlanta. And come July, yours truly is going to become a part of the Medicare generation. Arrragh! Pray for us, OK ... and for Holy Cross ... and know that we remember you daily.

Be God's smile for someone today!

Fr. Herb

☺ Hugs!

DROPPING THE F-WORD: FEAR, FEAR, FEAR, FEAR

One of the media that I enjoy reading every so often is the on-line version of “The Onion,” which gives a satirical take on the news of the day. It’s not tabloid stuff, but real news given a humorous, tongue-in-cheek twist. For example, one headline in today’s issue (April 23) states how Russia launched into orbit mice, geckos, gerbils, snails, fish and a variety of micro-organisms, which will all be monitored for 30 days before returning to Earth. Said the commentator: “Space will prove hard on these animals, but their greatest challenge will be working as a team out there.”

Here’s what “The Onion” said about the week of April 15: “Maybe next time we have a week they can try not to pack it to the brim with explosions, mutilations, death, manhunts, lies, weeping and the utter uselessness of our political system.”

The writer of a truly excellent blog called “Millennial... Young Catholics, An Ancient Faith, A New Century,” reflected on the Boston bombings, the cowardice of the Senate in refusing to allow simple debate on universal background checks and the innumerable shootings that took place throughout that week in the U.S. She suggested that we are a nation well on its way to idolatry of guns, violence and personal rights to the exclusion of the common good and personal responsibility. Many feel the very fabric of our society is coming apart at the seams, especially because of the “personal rights” mantra.

Now add into this continued unease with the state of the economic recovery, slow employment gains, the effects of the sequester, the slow diminishment of retirement savings, the political posturing which plays on individual fears and you have a citizenry that almost to a person wonders “What’s next?” The palpable sense of relief and hope that resulted from the election of Pope Francis and the early weeks of his papacy points how deeply fear and disenchantment had worked its way into the communal Catholic soul. Catholics too were wondering: “What’s next?”

The United States is an unhappy place. We are a nation consumed by fear, stress, anger and depression. I see it every day when I drive into the office: Rarely do I see a smile on the faces of my fellow drivers. On Easter Sunday, I noticed how most of the folks at Mass seemed so glum and unsmiling. The Alleluias sounded like a

funeral dirge. So before I began my homily, I said: “For Pete’s sake, folks, smile!! It’s Easter! Y’all look like you’re getting ready for a colonoscopy.” I really did say that ... and it worked!!! People sang and responded with much more gusto and they left smiling. God alone knows how many told their families at Easter dinner about my comment!! Ah, well ... it just adds to my legend! I very quickly learned that one of the best gifts I can bring to this retirement community is my sometimes-weird sense of humor.

Now yes, there are legitimate fears. If you see a tornado or hurricane coming at you, you’ll take action. If you find a lump on your breast or your heart goes racing madly out of control, you’ll be scared. If you’re driving across the Mojave Desert and your car starts making weird noises, your panic index will soar. Legitimate fear has to do with what you are *at this moment* facing. It’s real, it’s definite, it has substance. You can touch it, see it, smell or taste it and you try to deal with it as best as possible.

Then there are the “might be real but I’m not sure” fears. A few weeks ago, in an Elkhart Ind. gas station, someone found a warning scrawled on the bathroom mirror saying that 20 students would be harmed April 15 at unspecified schools in Elkhart and St. Joseph counties. Although police downplayed the threat as “vague and unspecified,” area schools responded with beefed-up security and many parents kept their children home for the day. Later in the week, Jim Frabutt, a fellow in ND’s Institute for Educational Initiatives, said parents ought to keep in mind that some threats do not warrant a strong response from schools and police. “Just saying there was a threat sounds so off-putting and scary to some people,” Frabutt said. “Not every threat is created equal; not every threat should be treated equally seriously.”

But most of the time, our fear exists only in our minds. It’s being afraid of something or some imagined future “catastrophe” that is not yet real, and fact, it may never become real. For example, the day after the Boston bombing, while sitting and listening to the First Reading, I caught myself wondering how I would react if someone came in the chapel door and started shooting folks. Yes, there are really evil people out there and no place is safe. But really: What are the chances of it happening?

Trust me when I say that modern media, politicians, business, special-interest organizations and advertising companies milk this imaginary fear for all it’s worth ... and it’s worth a fortune to them. Even though the level of risk is very low or non-existent, they can make you afraid of almost anything you haven’t experienced or can’t understand. Fear sells, even more so than sex. It brings results. It has a stranglehold on your imagination. It makes you want to act in a certain way or vote a certain way or buy a specific product. Even something such as anti-wrinkling cream is fear-based. The next time you are watching the news or listening to a speech or advertisement, think about the message: Is it happy and exciting? Or, is it scaring you, diminishing your self-esteem? Sometimes it’s subtle (If I don’t use this deodorant people won’t love me), sometimes blatant (grainy images and ominous music in political ads) and sometimes disguised as comedy (that Mayhem dude in the insurance commercial). Use your objective judgment ... you’ll be shocked at how widespread it is.

So what’s the antidote?

When faced with real, objective fear, all you can do is to do what you can and trust that all will work out. Don’t be too proud to ask for help and assistance ... more than anything else that will take the edge off the fear. Having to face real danger alone is utterly frightening.

But with the imagined fear or anxiety, we make choices. Either we ride the wild, bucking bronco of the fearful emotion or we opt not to. Remembering the past is a good choice to make. I can’t tell you how often the things I was most anxious about never came to pass, or if they did, they were nowhere near as bad as imagined and surprisingly easy to cope with. I survived and grew ... and this remembrance is a wonderful corrective to present anxiety.

Don’t be afraid to talk with professionals or clergy. Fear can paralyze and trap you, and often talking about it releases the paralysis and gives you insights into other alternatives. There is no shame in doing this ... you don’t have to be afraid of what the counselor or clergy person will think of you. Believe me, we’ve heard it all, plus we’ve had to learn to confront and deal with our own fears.

Use your common sense and intelligence. You know when someone is playing on your fear. Sometimes it’s very obvious, sometimes very subtle. If it doesn’t give you life and spirit, then it’s not worth your time to listen or read or accompany.

Associate with those who give you life. It is said of Pope Francis that when he went into the slums of Rio de Janeiro, it was like oxygen for him. He drew his energy and happiness from the poor who lived there. Where do you find your life and happiness, your oxygen? Time and time again, when I’ve grown disenchanted with the governance of our Church, I would turn my focus to the folks in the pews – to you. There I would find my hope and faith rekindled. And look at first-responders: Who doesn’t draw courage and strength from their bravery and compassion?

Remember God’s covenant with us ... God is faithful to God’s promise, despite our infidelity. Hold fast to the fact that over and over again in Scripture, Jesus and his Father are constantly saying to people in one way or another: “Do not be afraid.” They promise their presence with us, that they will be at our side with strength and protection. God will slake our deepest thirst, feed our deepest hunger, satisfy our desires to the full ... there is no need to engage in the “fear-busting tactics” of eating, drinking, doing drugs, shopping, sexual activity and so on. They never work. Within minutes, hours or days, the same fear has ahold of our imagination again.

Prayer helps ... a lot. I’ve mentioned this before, but it bears repeating. When I feel my imagination running wild and I’m entering into the aloneness of fear, I have a particular style of prayer: 1) I call upon the Lord; 2) I specifically name what I’m afraid of; and 3) simply ask: “Help me.” Naming the fear takes away its power over you. So I might pray as follows: “Jesus, divine Physician, I’m afraid of the upcoming surgery and of what might happen. Help me.” “Father, I’m afraid that I’ll be getting a pink slip at work. Help me.” Call upon Mary and the saints and your loved ones in Heaven ... they too are capable of helping you. Pray the Good Shepherd Psalm. Page through the Gospels and see how often Jesus helps those who are afraid.

And finally, you can laugh at your fears. For that, turn the page