

6th Friday of Easter “No Pain No Gain”
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May 22, 2020

I love the Acts of the Apostles, there is St. Paul in Corinth...and he is there for some time, at least a year and a half, evangelizing and building up the Church there. This was no easy task because the synagogue obviously wasn't happy with Paul's success given that they arrested him and took him to the Roman official for judgment. And the Romans didn't like Christians either. However, it is interesting that Gallio is not unlike Pontius Pilate in that he has no interest in getting involved in a religious dispute, however, in this instance Gallio got away with it. As brutal as the Romans were, they were also pragmatic. Of course, St. Paul knew that everything that was transpiring there in that moment was God's will. God told Paul that he would not be harmed. However, these early days of Christianity were not easy one bit.

A life lesson we all learn at some point is that anything in this life that is worth pursuing is going to bring with it no shortage of suffering. A mountain climber has to deal with sore muscles and occasional broken bone. Politicians get to have every aspect of their private lives paraded through the media. Every artist has to deal with what feels like years of rejection before they finally get recognized. Everything worthwhile requires sacrifice. As the saying goes, “No pain, no gain”.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus refers to this kind of pain as akin to a mother giving birth to a child. There is probably nothing more painful than giving birth, especially in those days. Of course, guys can only imagine how painful this is. I remember Carol Burnett trying to describe the experience of giving birth to guys once. She said, OK guy take your bottom lip and then pull it over your head. I thought that image was funny...and I am told this is a pretty good description of the pain involved. However, we all know that most mothers would say that the tremendous pain they experienced giving birth to a child was worth it.

Jesus describes this kind of pain involved with the process of building his church, and from our first reading, I don't think St. Paul would disagree. You and I however have received the blessing of worshiping God in our tradition because of the sacrifices of those who came before us. The witness of the early Church invites us to consider what is our faith made of? What are we willing to do in building up the Kingdom of God? I think at the end of this pandemic we will learn a lot because some will decide not to come back to church at all and some will come back to their parish and will make them stronger than ever. I also suspect that some of our younger people will answer the call of the Holy Spirit and pursue a vocation. I have faith that this will happen. However, I don't think the world has an easy road ahead. I think whatever good that comes about from these times is going to take a lot of work. We are all going to have to ask ourselves the question at some point, what am I willing to sacrifice for the Gospel and for my Church in the days and years to come?