

6th Sunday of Easter “A Cure for the Grumpies”

Fr. Frank Schuster

My friends, I don't know about you, but as the days get warmer and lovelier and as our time for “social distancing” goes on longer than we had originally hoped, it feels like the everyday people I interact with at the store or on the roads are becoming significantly less patient and far more grumpier than normal. Am I alone here? I was wondering about that so I decided to research this a bit. And it turns out, yeah, it looks like people are getting somewhat grumpier. I read one article that said is alcohol consumption is way up. This means there is a lot of self-medicating going on. According to another article, there is evidently a substantial increase of people seeking medical care for depression and anxiety these days. And, perhaps related somewhat to the increase of depression and alcohol abuse, there was also an article from ABC news that said divorce rates are increasing substantially in our country right now. This is horrible. These are not easy times. And so, yeah, if you think the people around you are getting significantly grumpier at places like the grocery store, it isn't your imagination. We are living in hard times.

This got me thinking, what would be a more positive way to deal with the case of the “grumpies”? We are human, so we all get a case of the “grumpies” from time to time. So, what are creative ways to deal with it? I began to research that. And the winner goes to a guy in Kensington, Maryland who discussed with his wife and daughter this very issue going on in his neighborhood. And it turns out, his youngest daughter gave him a book last Christmas of a collection of “bad dad jokes” and so, at his wife's prompting, he decided to put up a sign in his yard that he updated every day with a new “bad dad joke”.

And they aren't bad. For example, what do you call a bear with no teeth? A gummy bear. What do call a factory that produces OK items? A satisfactory! Evidently the neighborhood favorite was: I just ordered a chicken and an egg from Amazon...I'll let you know. As in, which came first, the chicken or the egg? Come on, that's funny.

As it turns out, their little house started getting a lot of attraction from the people in his town. His yard by the street turned into a pilgrimage site for locals looking for anything to help lift their spirits. His sense of humor not only received appreciation from his local neighbors but also received a lot of attention from news stations as well, even the Washington Post. I bet this family didn't see that coming. But it goes to show, how desperate people are right now to find a reason to smile. This family from Kensington, Maryland gave everyone a much needed shot in the arm of, shall we call it, defiant joy. And this joy that they shared with others gave their community a reason for hope.

I love our second reading from St. Peter. It has one of those lines from the bible we sometimes need to write down and put on our refrigerators. St. Peter reminds us, “Beloved: Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope...” This line has always been a shot in the arm for me because these words are being addressed to a first century Christian

community that was in a constant state of persecution. If we ever think we have a reason to be grumpy, just read up on what life was like for these folks and what they went through. If I were tempted to put up a sign in our church driveway, I think it would be, “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” Which, for me also says, if the world give us a reason to be grumpy, remember who we are. Remember who we are.

And here is the easiest trivia question for the day: what is the reason for our hope? In a single word, the reason for our hope is Jesus. The reason for our hope is Jesus. In our Gospel reading, Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper right before his passion, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.” This passage is beautiful. What this means is we are intimately connected every minute of the day to Jesus. And because of that, we are also intimately connected with his Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. Because we are one with Jesus, we are now one with God. We are not orphans. Through his passion, death and resurrection Jesus has welcomed us into the inner life of God. To be baptized Christians is to enter into an eternal story of love that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We most definitely have a reason for hope.

You see, my friends, a basic and essential characteristic of someone who is a follower of Jesus is someone who has hope. And this hope we have in the future has an effect on how we deal with the challenges we face every day. The more we pray our way through this world, the more the Holy Spirit can work inside of us and through us to make the world a better place. We become ambassadors of this divine hope by the decisions we make and the example we set to the people around us, our family members, our co-workers, and even the people who grimace at us at the grocery store. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be ambassadors of hope in these times, as difficult as they are.

A good saint who understood this was St. Theresa of Avila. She had good advice for those who lived 500 years ago and it is good advice for us today in the times we live in. She writes, “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience achieves everything. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices. Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.” What St. Theresa of Avila meant by this is, we are Jesus’ ambassadors to the world. We see this world with Jesus’ eyes. Our feet are called to take us where Jesus needs us to be. Our hands, that are capable of so many things, not all of them great, are the very tools Jesus uses to bless the world. St. Theresa of Avila is so very wise. Whenever we get tempted to have a case of the “grumpies” St. Theresa of Avila reminds us to remember who we are. We are followers of Jesus. This makes us ambassadors for hope.