

6th Thursday of Easter “In a Little While”

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Whenever I read this Gospel reading, I can't help but think of memories from my childhood hiking with my family up a trail from Cougar Rock Campground to Paradise. It is a beautiful hike...but it is an uphill hike. It is a good hike to take kids on because there was always a promise of an ice cream cone at the lodge or at the visitor center (in those days). For my mom and dad, there was also the promise of a cold beer! Getting there and back was an all-day affair. Coming back down from Paradise was no problem for my young knees at the time. Hiking up the trail was a real workout though. As we would periodically stop for a water break, and look at the switchbacks ahead of us, I remember asking a number of times along the way, “Are we almost there yet?” And my mother's reply would be, “in a little while Frank...in a little while”. These were consoling words the first time you heard them...but then you start asking yourself after another half hour of climbing, what does this “little while” actually mean? I was of course the family philosopher so I would bring that incongruity to my parents' attention. My mom would then just remind me about the ice cream cone at the end. It's coming. Eventually, as the elevation increased relentlessly, she would begin to just flat out lie to us, “One more switchback I think, just one more switchback”. The ice cream at Paradise was never a lie though. And let me tell you...after a hike like that, an ice cream cone at Paradise is heaven. I imagine for my parents, a cold beer qualified as heavenly too.

Jesus tells his disciples, “A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while later and you will see me.” The disciples ask themselves, what does Jesus mean by that? It sounds like one more switchback. And Jesus is honest with them, yeah there is work ahead. In fact you will grieve as the world rejoices but take heart the day will come when your tears will turn to joy. It is a message about hope.

St. Paul probably appreciated that as he was having a rough go at it in our first reading, failing to convert the hearts of his fellow Jews. The frustration evidently was enough for St. Paul to rip his garments and say, “Enough, I am going to focus my efforts on the Gentiles instead”. I find this moment in the bible very insightful given how successful he ended up being evangelizing the Gentiles. It goes to show that God sometimes uses our shortcomings and failures as a way to guide us to our real vocation. Which, I suppose in the bigger picture, doesn't make the frustrating moments of our lives shortcomings or failures at all, but rather...one more switchback.

And so, I think an invitation today could be to spend a moment and reflect on what we see as our shortcomings and our failures. As we reflect on our shortcomings and failures, can we see the presence of God's grace? God continually calls us to conversion, yes, but could he be also redirecting our attention to the trail ahead where Paradise awaits? If we have faith, hope, love and no shortage of perseverance we are going to get there, my friends, we will get there. When you might ask? In a little while.