

Sermon: March 8, 2009
“Hey, Rev ... how are the offerings?”

Sometimes I feel sorry for Peter. He gets “slapped around” pretty good in the gospel for today.
So often Peter just says what’s on his mind ... and, well, it comes out all wrong!@!!
Back to Peter later.

Do you ever have a day when you simply feel “out of whack”??
You feel like our head is in a mayonnaise jar ... you just don’t “feel right.” You worry about stupid things ...
“little things” get you down ... and you say: “I’m just not myself today.”
(Well ... if you’re not yourself ... then who are you??)
It’s kind-of like ----- everything catches up to you ... you don’t feel “in control” like you usually do.

Anyway ---- I’m sitting alone in my little garage in Crescent City. The sun is setting ... I look across the
farmer’s field ... gaze at the old oak and maple trees ... I’m thinking about “stuff” and people ...
For some reason ... I begin thinking about things I’m really tired of. It sounds so silly and selfish ... in fact,
it is silly and selfish ... but I share it anyway ...

*I’m tired of talk radio ... especially when it disagrees with me!!
I’m tired of politics.*

*I’m especially tired of the “state of Illinois” ... and what is it they are doing down there? Quit playing
games ... quit worrying about the senate seat ... and start paying some bills!!*

*I’m tired of religion and the church ----- the self-righteous preaching, the divisions ... turning a humble
carpenter-savior into something he was never meant to be ...*

*I’m tired of the stock market. Every time some economist sneezes and “expectations aren’t met” ... our money
just flies out the window.*

*I’m tired of multi-million dollar athletes, who claim they don’t get enough respect.
Respect is something you earn ... you don’t get paid for it.*

I’m tired of jealousy and anger ... and what it does to innocent people.

*I’m tired of good people suffering from cancer and Alzheimer’s and MS ... and how it engulfs their
lives and takes away their freedom.*

I’m tired of gangs and drive-by shootings.

I’m tired of kids on a team ... who never get to play.

I’m tired of people who don’t take the time to say “thanks.”

I’m tired of cynicism and self-righteousness ... and maybe most of all:

I AM TIRED OF MYSELF ... when I think this way.

The sun sets ... the darkness comes.

I realize anew ----- this is life. It’s in the midst of all this “stuff” that God calls us to live.
In the midst of all this ----- we are called to reach out and make a difference.

It really hit me the other day ... when I got a notice about a “line of credit” I never applied for. So, stupid me ---
I thought I would call them to see what happened. The problem is ---- I couldn’t get a hold of a real-live-human
being!@!! The machine asked for my “pin number” ... what the heck is a “pin number”???? There were 8 or 9
options on the phone ... by the time I got to option 9, I forgot what the other options were.

ALL I WANTED WAS A HUMAN ... A VOICE!!

We live in a world that can be very impersonal. The world is busy ... it’s rough ... it’s noisy.
Somehow ... in the middle of all this ... we need to create “little pockets of decency and goodness” along the
way. It’s too easy to become disconnected ... it’s too easy to feel like we don’t “belong” ... it’s too easy to
feel like nobody cares.

Wherever it is that you spend your time ... a church, the bank, a small business, home with family ...
it's important for each of us to be a beacon of hope to those who cross our paths.
From the unemployment line to the halls of Sandburg High School ... the young lady behind the counter at Gas
City ----- a smile, a thank-you, a hot cup of coffee ... one little act of kindness can turn somebody's
day around.

Back to Peter. Jesus is talking about having to die ... and Peter is afraid. So, he takes issue with what he is
hearing ... to which Jesus responds: "GET BEHIND ME, SATAN."
Now, I don't believe for a minute that Jesus talked to Peter this way. Peter is a lot like us ----- he is afraid
when he finds out he is losing probably the most important person in his life. I think how I would be ...
if I lost my beautiful wife ... or one of my precious kids ... or even my job.
Many of you know what it's like.
PETER IS US. And when Jesus mentions "Satan" ... well, he is saying to us ----- all this negative
stuff ... all this fear ... all that drags us down ... "get it behind you ... NOW"!!

In the end ... Peter discovers ... Jesus had to leave. Jesus had to leave ... so his "spirit of goodness and
decency" good live and grow in the hearts and souls of his followers. Jesus died ...he gave it all ...
and now it all comes alive in us.

The other day at the "Riv" ... in search of fitness and sermon ideas ... well ... I love my "catholic friends"
there. And Bobby ---- he's as "Catholic" as I am "Lutheran."
He stops me: "Hey, Rev ... how is the economy affecting your church??"
(I have to be careful how I answer these questions ... 'cause I know ---- what I say eventually hits the halls of
St. Michael's and Good Shepherd and other local temples.)
"What are you really asking, Bobby."
"Actually, Rev ... how are the collections???"

That's my buddy ... let's get to the heart of the matter ... are we taking in enough money????
"Well, let me tell you, my friend ---- ATTENDANCE IS UP ... MONEY IS DOWN!!"

I told him this is ok. It's life. As long as people are comin' to church ... praying ... reflecting ...
seeking hope ... saying "thanks" ----- as long a we are here ... together ... we'll be ok!!
When times are tough ... don't stay away ---- COME TO CHURCH.
If you worry about not being able to give what you'd like ... don't stay away ---- COME TO CHURCH.
Each of us has lots to give. It may not be measured by your check book ... but it's measured by the
love and caring, coming from deep inside your soul.

Yes, I'm tired of lots of things.
But never ... have I been so full of hope.

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March 8, 2009
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