

Sermon: May 3, 2009
“No man is an island”

I was thinking of our kids ... the stunning youth retreat from last week ... and began reminiscing about youth retreats I was on back in high school. I remember one ---- and this is back in the so-called “hippie days” ... when the mark of a good retreat was how often you cried.

Each night we would sing the ol’ song ---- “*No man is an island ... no man stands alone. Each man’s joy is joy to me ... each man’s grief is my own ...*”

That’s it. It’s back then that I got this compulsion to say what I so repeat (sometimes ad nauseam!):
WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.

Once in a while I go back and read some of my old sermons. My gosh --- I say the same thing every week.
“We’re all in this together ... life is a love-bucket ... amen.”

I had a dream the other night. I was preaching ... so, I guess it was more of a nightmare.
In the middle of my sermon, I began to sing the song --- “No man is an island.”
Afterwards ... many of you were muttering: “Maybe Don has been here too long.”

Too often ... we live our lives ... as if we are on an island ... all by ourselves.

I know ----- I can be ridiculously self-centered. Most of us are, at times.

From parking spots ... to getting good seats at the ladies’ luncheon today ... trying to be first in line ... making sure our kids get enough playing time on the little league team ... our schedules and agendas ... Sometimes ... even our giving is selfish ... because we want to make sure others notice what we do.

But ----- when we get out of our “island mentality” ... when we really begin to believe that our destiny is a shared destiny ... it makes an incredible difference in the way we think and look at the world. When we read about someone or think about someone ... it becomes more than just a story.

“Sun Times” today ... front page. Remember “Girl X”??? Thirteen years ago ... at the age of 9 ... she was beaten and assaulted ... and left for dead in a Cabrini Green stairwell. She is now 22: blind, can’t speak, confined to a wheelchair, she uses a computer by blinking her eyes. She writes poetry.

You read her story ... you believe “we are all in this together” ... it becomes more than “just a story.”

It’s about you ... it’s about me ... it’s about her ... **WE ARE CONNECTED.**

Her pain is our pain ... her story is our story ... her life matters to each one of us.

I think this morning about Anne Fritz and her family. Our destinies are so connected.

If there is any word that send chills up and down our spine ... any word that reminds us of how fragile life can be ... it has to be the word *cancer*. Maybe for you the word is Alzheimer’s ... or muscular dystrophy ... or MS ... or heart-failure. Certain words ... when you hear them ... when they become a part of you or someone you love ----- you know your life will never be the same!!

And yet ... it’s often out of these stories ... it’s in the midst of these journeys ----- we see some of the most incredible acts of courage ... that forever can change us and inspire us.

I’ve watched so many of you confront major changes in your lives. In the midst of living with something like cancer or Alzheimer’s ----- you continue to live your life with grace and goodness. You don’t blame ... you don’t get angry ... rather, you reach-out with love and courage ...

You are a beacon of life and hope to the world.

And this is exactly what Jesus teaches us.

This is precisely how God calls us to live.

There is no person ...
There is no journey ...
that can't be soil from which God speaks to us.
When you face something that drastically changes your life ... well, people are watching.
It's is precisely here ... where God can "scoop you up" ... "in the palm of his hand" ... and you become
the face and spirit of Jesus for someone else.
And, in turn maybe someone else's journey does this for you.

We all know what it's like.
You son or daughter ... your grandson or granddaughter ... someone you care about ...
he/she comes up to bat ... they are playing the violin in their first concert ... and they strike-out or play the
wrong note ... and you wish, for a moment ----- you could take their place ... so they wouldn't have to hurt or
feel embarrassed.

Your loved-one is being wheeled into surgery ... or you see their tears of pain ... and, for a moment, you
would give anything to trade places and share some of that pain.
This is how much you care.

Why do you feel this way? because you believe in your soul:
"No person is an island ... no one should stand alone ... we are in this together!!"

I walked into church this morning ... thinking of Anne and Dan ... thinking of Child X ...
thinking of each of you ----- your journeys, your joys, your pain ...
Then I see the Psalm for today ----- #23.
These words: it's really all we need.
It's not complicated ... no rules or stipulations ... just the goodness of God's promise.

*THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, AND I SHALL NOT WANT.
HE LEADS ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.*

True ... sometimes the waters get kind-of rough.
But together ... yes, together ----- the "green pastures" are never far away.

*Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
May 3, 2009*

www.allsaintsjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939