

# JANUARY 28, 2024: 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME



After my motorcycle accident I did not shave for two months. I figured it would be too tiring to stand on one leg while trying to shave and so I decided to wait. I ended up growing a full beard and had to actually go to the barber in January to have it shaved off. Since I can now stand on both legs, it is fairly easy to shave myself. I just have to be careful to keep the correct weight balance on my right leg. But, because of the beard, something really interesting happened over that two-month period.

I use facial recognition on my phone to open my phone and various apps. As my beard grew and filled in, my phone had more and more difficulty recognizing me. It got to a point that I really had to stop using it until I shaved. I was fascinated by what was happening and, honestly, at times a little frustrated, but at the same time it was kind of amusing.

What was true of the phone and facial recognition can often be true of our relationships with others. Very often, events in our lives can produce changes in how we act and how others are perceiving us. They may not always recognize who we are. How we deal with trauma—physical, spiritual, emotional, psychological and such—many times can impact how we interact with God and others. These changes sometimes are temporary and resolve themselves as we work through our struggles. Other times they can become a permanent part of our personality. And how we deal with trauma in our lives is a subjective reality. Many times people have certain expectations of how a person should proceed with whatever has happened. The reality is that trauma affects everyone and there is an objective reality around what the trauma does. In my case, I broke two bones in my right leg and it caused a tremendous amount of pain. The breaks were so bad that they required surgery on the same day. I was then called to follow certain medical advice to ensure that my leg would heal properly. I was given both Tylenol and Oxycodone to help me address the pain. I have had to use a walker and walking boot, and so on. Objectively, anyone who encountered what happened to me would have faced the same reality and choices.

But, subjectively, how someone else would have dealt with this type of injury would not necessarily be the same as how I dealt with it. I, fortunately, have a high tolerance for pain and, as such, only needed the Tylenol for the pain, which I was able to stop using in December. I am also fortunate in how I have cared for my body prior to the accident. I went to the gym regularly, ate a good diet, took my time off, and the like. As such, my body has been able to make the necessary adjustments that allowed me to do exactly what I needed to do for healing. My legs are strong and my balance is good for my age. That allowed me to walk only on one leg without any struggle for almost two months. In caring for my body, the healing of my right leg is proceeding really well. I will admit that I have faced issues with patience and frustration at times, but when that happened I was able to focus on the long-term goal. I recognize that “my job” right now is to do what I need to do to get better. I also have a pretty optimistic attitude about everything. From that optimism, I know that in time things will work themselves out. Plus, I know that God is with me and supporting me. My ability to confront the struggles I have had arises from this knowledge and other aspects of my personality. I would not expect others to necessarily respond in the same way to a similar experience. The factors that determine how we deal with evil and suffering in our life are unique to each individual.

The problem is that many people have expectations about how others should respond to trauma. And when the person in their life does not respond as expected, they can get frustrated with them. They may think and/or even say: “It’s time to get over it.” “It’s time to move on.” “It’s time to.....” You can fill in your own thoughts around this. The reality is that there is no right way to respond to tragedy and trauma in our life. But, because a person does not respond “in the right way” we can begin to think there is something wrong with them. We can begin to think that we do not really know them or recognize who they are.

Fortunately, we always have One who will recognize us—and that is God. God will always look beyond the superficial layers and see who we really are. God’s facial recognition will never be fooled by our reactions to the experiences in our life. God sees into our heart, and for God it is our heart that determines who we really are. He is our rock and source of strength in all that happens in our life. As Psalm 62 proclaims:

“My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation.  
God alone is my rock and salvation, my fortress; I shall never fall.  
My soul, be at rest in God alone, from whom comes my hope.

God alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not fall.  
My deliverance and honor are with God, my strong rock and refuge.  
Trust God at all times, my people!  
Pour out your hearts to God our refuge!"

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to call me at (978) 254-0560. If you prefer to email, please visit.....

<https://theholyrood.org/email-fr-brian>.

Please keep me in your prayers.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".