



February 18, 2024 First Sunday of Lent

"The time is now; God's kingdom is here. Change your direction and believe in the Good News". Mark 1:15



Dear Friends;

There is a song from R.E.M. called **Hold On** that I'd like to share with you. Here are the lyrics:

When your day is long
And the night, the night is yours alone
When you're sure you've had enough
Of this life, well hang on

Don't let yourself go
'Cause everybody cries
Everybody hurts sometimes

Sometimes everything is wrong
Now it's time to sing along

When your day is night alone (hold on, hold on)
If you feel like letting go (hold on)
If you think you've had too much
Of this life, well hang on

'Cause everybody hurts
Take comfort in your friends
Everybody hurts

Don't throw your hand, oh no
Don't throw your hand
If you feel like you're alone
No, no, no, you are not alone

If you're on your own in this life
The days and nights are long
When you think you've had too much
Of this life to hang on

Well, everybody hurts sometimes
Everybody cries
Everybody hurts, sometimes

And everybody hurts sometimes
So hold on, hold on
Hold on, hold on, hold on
Hold on, hold on, hold on

Everybody hurts

One of the big controversies in the New Testament is, "Why, if he was the Messiah, was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist?" All four Gospels wrestle with this question.

The answer is rooted in the reason why Jesus came in the first place. God comes in the flesh in Jesus not merely to clean up the mess of human sinfulness. In Jesus, God comes to identify with God's creation which also entails its brokenness. Revealing the merciful compassion of God, Jesus tells us to "hold on." Jesus comes to release us to be who we were made to be.

The retired Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams writes that the thing from which we most need to be delivered is our temptation of the myth of "*self-sufficiency*." This is a diabolical urge that destroys our well-being again and again. It is the temptation to think of ourselves as somehow able to set our own agenda in isolation. The most toxic paradox that results is that we become isolated from ourselves and one another.

In the Incarnation, Jesus takes on the fullness of our humanity along with its joys and sorrows. While there are many complex things that separate us and make us different from one another, there is one thing that unites us. We all are united in suffering. No matter who it is we are faced with our limits, and our brokenness. And we all will die.

Jesus's baptism tells us that Jesus comes to identify with us in all things including our brokenness and alienation. And he administers the medicine of mercy which is the loving compassion of God. The Good News tells us that we are not alone. United in our suffering we are set free to administer together love and compassion. One in Christ's suffering we will be one with him in his glory.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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