

GOOD FRIDAY

ST. ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE CHURCH MARCH 30, 2018

REV. THOMAS W. WYRSCH

THE AMAZING SPIRIT OF JESUS

Winter is fading, although we may get another shot or two. You know that I like to snow, but there is another reason that I'm sorry to see winter go: you can see more, can see a farther distance. Down at my family's home in the city, there's a very large tree. It's actually beautiful with two different trunks coming out of it. I didn't notice the two trunks until this winter for some reason. When there's no vegetation on all leaves, nothing around it you can really make out the beauty of the tree trunk-- only when there's less stuff around it

That's what tonight is like. Tonight is a liturgy that's very stark. It's not even a liturgy, as such. There are almost no special rubrics or instructions on what to do. There's no Eucharist; we'll have communion offered, but the communion from last night. It's not the reenactment of the Last Supper that was last night. Tonight is simply a very stark reflection on who Jesus is. A couple of weeks ago, that's what struck me as I thought ahead to tonight. This is a night where we don't talk about the teachings of Jesus, hardly anything about his miracles, or actions in the communities around him-- but just focus on the very spirit of Jesus himself, itself- in history, in that body. Not everywhere yet, but the historical spirit of the son of God in the body of Jesus of Nazareth as he went through his last moments So let's focus on the very individual spirit of Jesus and how magnificent it is.

I consulted with a couple of medical people to ask, "How can we trace a human person with a tremendous spirit?" I called a doctor that I'm close to, and she said "Well look at how they handle things in their life: blood pressure heart rate. How well do they recover those? How resilient are they when bad things happen?" And she said the way the Great Spirit gets that way is by awareness of God what we call today meditation many people are calling it mindfulness. It's becoming a big thing that people discovered-- yes if you take a few moments out you become aware, and you become less subject to all the tension and anxiety in your life. So she said watch the heart rate and blood pressure, and see how quickly a great person recovers and is resilient. Then I called our parish nurse and said: Okay, what are the ways to track the blood pressure and the heart rate? Well, the heart rate, the heart rate monitor-- do it when I'm exercising sometimes is right here on my wrist-- know what heart rate monitor is. The blood pressure checker is that thing with which you check blood pressure, thing that goes around your arm and you squeeze the bulb? Well there's a word for it. Here goes: it's the sphygmomanometer. (She said I said it right!) It's how you check the blood pressure. so I want to look briefly at Jesus and his passion, and really use parts of all the gospel passions together the heart rate of Jesus and the blood pressure Jesus and how quickly this great spirit doesn't get stuck like we get stuck.

Because that's stress. Our blood pressure goes up and we're like that for days. We say we can't

even think straight, and we're right. Jesus can think and act and love even in the most extreme circumstances. He's so quick at recovering his ability to be with people and to think and love.

So to start with, Jesus went to the garden today and he prayed again garden of Gethsemane. He was exceedingly sorrowful well the nurse that when you're that sorrowful, for your blood pressure probably goes up, but your heart rate actually goes down, depressed very sorrowful. How long did Jesus stay that way? As long as it took for him to say first, "Father take this cup away", and then in a few moments to say, "Father you will be done. Let it be as you say." That's all the longer he was affected. This Great Spirit was able to put himself back in God's hands.

What about the dear disciples? "Just stay here a few minutes, guys, and pray." And he came back and they were sleeping; and he said, "Couldn't you have watched one hour?!" He was irritated, you can hear it in his voice. Blood pressure went up a little. He got irritated, his heartrate went up. But shortly after that, "Okay you know what, Just sleep. You're gonna need it. It's okay. Quickly! He didn't stay in that agitated state.

Then when his follower Judas came again he expressed a real disappointment: "Judas, would you betray me with a kiss?" Use this human sign of love and affection and betray me? Jesus was kind of scandalized, outraged. There goes the blood pressure again; there goes heart rate little bit up. When that happens to us, we don't expect ourselves to be very thoughtful of other people. And yet when one of his own followers cut the ear of the slave, Jesus could stoop to the ground, pick up the ear, and heal the man! Even feeling betrayed and angry. How long would it have taken us to get out of that state, that desire for vengeance maybe—"Look at what my own follower just did to me!" No, he picked up the ear and healed somebody.

What an amazing spirit! that he can go through life with all the ups and downs and more than we've ever had, and still be able to serve to love to listen to God. Look at the very extreme, his crucifixion. No greater bodily torture. Many of us have read about it: crucifixion, As long as it lasts, designed to be the worst pain the human body can endure. Surely we couldn't think our way through that. Surely we couldn't pay attention to anybody else in the midst of that. But look at Jesus: among his first words, "Father forgive them." in extreme physical anguish-- blood pressure pumping and just everything in the body screaming, "Get me out of here!" And yet his spirit said, "Forgive them." We can't be expected to work if we're being tortured; from the cross, Jesus created a new community: "Woman mother this disciple is your son." He created the church! "Son listen to that woman, she's your mother!" He created community, in his physical anguish-- still able to think, to act, to love, to reconcile.

And of course, putting together again what the different gospel writers wrote, at one point he said "Father why have you abandoned me?" Now there's kind of an asterisk on that; maybe that was a human feeling he had. he also was telling us, "Read Psalm 22." Go home tonight and read Psalm 22. Because he was referring to the anguish expressed in that psalm, but also the ultimate trust of a follower of God that the psalm finishes with. So he was referring to Psalm 22, but let's say humanly he did say "Father you've abandoned me!" How mad would we be? what would our blood pressure be? And just little while later, "Into your hands I commend my spirit."

No anger at God that lasted any longer than that. It wasn't useful to him. He had no need for it. Resilient in love and service, and trust in God.

Now we see that spirit in you! Me, Father Steve, the deacons, Sister Emily, the staff-- a lot of different times. Times of grieving, you really cope. None of us do it like Jesus did; I don't either. We do our best though. We try to give praise and trust to the Father even when we're hurting. That's what it means to be a Jesus person, with his spirit. Maybe there's been a reversal of fortune of money, of happiness, family, marriage-- all those things that are so real, that make our blood pressure go up and make our pulse go up, or maybe down and you try. Because you are a Jesus person-- because you do respect his spirit.

We need that! The world needs the church tonight. Jesus made the church from the cross. Look at the world: how much anger, vindictiveness, pettiness is there, at every level every institution. We need the church, where we can be great people in our spirit, that maintains trust in God and love and service of others even when we are very agitated or hurt or offended or betrayed. We need you, the church to be the church in our world.

We have to keep it pure/ Easy for us as church people to say "We're Jesus people!" and then somebody else gets into our focus, and we begin to kind of put them almost in the place of Jesus at times-- some entertainer or some singer, somebody on The Voice maybe; some public official, some government official. We begin to look to them almost as much as Jesus, and when we talk to others, who do we talk more about-- Jesus Christ? or we talk about other people, humans-- none of whom, any of us included can do it the way Jesus did. So let's keep our adulation, admiration, pure *in Jesus* and not mix it up, and then we can be church.

That's our moment of veneration of the cross tonight. It's not a ritual-- this doesn't tell you what to do. You can make anything you want that means something to you. Some people just look-- we'll have a couple of sides of the cross, the two arms of the cross to come up on either side. Some people touch or look or bow or kneel; some kiss. It's not prescribed what to do. Whatever it is you do, make it your act that this is the spirit you trust-- uniquely different than any other spirit in your life or in the world. Because that's the spirit that we want to wind up looking like and like, and loving, and trusting God in any circumstance

One more moment, the most amazing one to me. You might know what's coming: the moment of death. John's Gospel tonight only his spirit can do this except that I see people doing it as best they can the moment of death is no more heart rate is no more pulse but he still giving. John doesn't say that I John says he gave over his spirit at the moment of death no pulse no heart rate still giving he gave over his spirit that's tomorrow night that's the story John can help with John is all one piece John starts Easter and Pentecost at the death on the cross so that's worth going

But tonight in the place and time the physical human body of Jesus we have a chance to see this. We have a chance to venerate from wherever you are your own action that this Jesus Christ this powerful spirit book of love and think insert in every circumstance that he is the one that we follow.