

From the Pastor's Desk

Today (Thursday) I was “forced” to reflect on the virtue of patience. I was scheduled to have a procedure (a back ablation) which was to be the final step in addressing chronic back pain that I have been dealing with for years.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of the week, I developed walking pneumonia and since I was on antibiotics the ablation had to be canceled, because if I had developed a further infection, it could have resulted in disastrous consequences for my back. In any case, I was greatly disappointed; however, the good news is that it has allowed me to reflect upon the virtue of patience.

You may find it interesting that patience was not considered a virtue by the ancients. But it was the first virtue that a Christian wrote an entire treatise about. Around 200 AD Tertullian wrote **On Patience**. Fifty years later, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage followed with a second treatise, **On the Good of Patience**. In the early fourth century, the philosopher Lactantius made patience a central theme in his writing. Finally, a century later after Lactantius, in 417 AD/CE the great Augustine added a third treatise, once again entitled **On Patience**. Having read them all, I have become convinced of the special qualities of patience. Patience is rooted in hope. It is grounded in the Resurrection. It is life oriented toward a future that is God's doing . . . [Tertullian], by introducing his readers to a virtue that was modeled on the biblical portrayal of God's relation to the world and to human beings, . . . redefined what it means to be “like God.”

For the early Christians, patience was not merely an adjustment to an unfortunate situation that was unavoidable. Rather, it was a robust sense of trust in the God who at His own pace brings about the fullness of His Kingdom, the God who is never in a hurry, who never forces things, the God who may take centuries to wait for the fullness of time, but the God who in the fullness of time, has sent Jesus in the flesh as the perfect disclosure of his character; who through resurrection has vindicated Jesus who had lived and taught and been persecuted and crucified; whose raising of Jesus is an earnest of hope for all who will follow him; the God who in the fullness of time has poured out the Holy Spirit to empower Jesus' followers so they can be in him and do what he taught. As a result of what the patient God has done, Christians can live a life of patience. As Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius and others pointed out, patience is the key to the spirituality of the Sermon on the Mount. As a result, believers, following and obeying Jesus, live patiently. Paraphrasing the Christians: we do not need to be in control of things; we are not in a hurry; we are not bound by conventional values; we will accept injury without retaliation and not be violent; we will trust the God of resurrection to vindicate truth, so we will not compel others to conform to our religious beliefs and observances. We Christians believe that

because of the work of God, made powerful in our experience by our own catechetical formation, we can live lives of patience in our daily lives, our jobs and professions. In every area of life, we believe, there is a patient way to get involved, and God calls us Christians to discover this patient way.

The good news for us is that, in practicing patience, all of us, having been formed in the image of God, can be formed ever more fully into God's likeness.

Disappointment can give way to joy, for in navigating our frustrations, we can come to embrace the virtue of hope, a goal that we have been striving toward as we make pilgrimage through the great Jubilee Year 2025. Both patience and hope then allow us to view the future with confidence, knowing that God always has been and always desires our good and will always act on our behalf because of the commitment that he has made to us in the person and EVENT of Jesus the Christ. Who would have thought that such good news would result from an unexpected cancelation of an "expected" medical procedure?

LEAVE THE LIGHT ON

*One of the goals of the observation of the Jubilee Year of Hope is the celebration of God's Mercy. Most, if not all of us, have had the opportunity to experience God's compassion in a tangible way in the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Jubilee Committee of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, with the blessing of Bishop Mark, has designated the second week of Lent as the period to observe the reconciliatory event: **Leave the Light On**. During this week, all the parishes in the diocese have been asked to add additional times for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here at **Visitation Parish**, Fr. John will be available to hear individual confessions and celebrate the sacrament on both **Monday, March 17th and Tuesday, March 18th at 6:00 PM** in the Church. Father will remain in the Church until all confessions are heard (and will be available at least until 7:00 PM each evening).*

*Please make the most of this opportunity. Remember, it is only when we admit our sinfulness, our brokenness, that we can be beneficiaries of God's gracious mercy. Also, remember that celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the steps in the process of being given the gift of a **plenary indulgence** by the Church. Christ is calling all of us to enter into a deeper relationship with him this Lent – are we willing to humble ourselves and accept this gracious invitation? PS: Remember that Fr. John is always available for individual celebrations of the Sacrament.*

THIS WEEK'S MEETINGS

JUBILEE COMMITTEE - *Thursday, March 20th - 1:00 PM - Elizabethan Suite.*

All members are asked to make every effort to attend. If you are unable to attend, please inform the parish office. Thank you.