29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Psalm 96

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Matthew 22:15-21

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

A word to the wise.

Discovering you have cancer must be a horrible time. What with the dread, questioning, worry and doubt. You go to your physician. You are referred to an oncologist. Test upon test – bloods, MRI, CT Scan, X-rays, sonograms. Doctor appointments. Worry upon worry. All these things can wear you down. The diagnosis. Positive. Tears. Why me, Lord? Why now? Fear. Panic. Your inner being refuses to acknowledge the cancer. Your body tells you differently. You accept the diagnosis. Resignation. You have cancer. Resolve. You are going to beat this thing.

So possible surgery. Even so, there are bouts of chemotherapy. Rounds of radiation. Poisons in your body to try and make you well again. You are made weak but you try to remain strong. Through surgery, your body is stripped of your personality. Not to mention the loss of your hair. You are not yourself. Can’t do the things that make you you.

Your family and friends try to be your support group. But they don’t really know what you are going through. They offer words of sympathy. Make allowances for your lack of strength. Try to bolster your spirit. Offer you their prayers. They don’t have cancer, however. They can’t understand.

You are approached by those who have battled cancer and won. They know. They know the trials and tribulations, the worry, the anxiety, the doubt. They help you steel yourself against the ravages of the sickness and the cure. They are a blessing to you. They are the conquering heroes. They give you hope.

But you are the one who is sick, right here and right now. It seems the cancer overcomes all your thoughts. You know friends and perhaps family members who have battled and lost. It weighs on your mind. It could be you.

All these thoughts and all these tests and all these cures weigh you down. Your energy is depleted. The energy of your body and your mind becomes less and less. The danger is that this loss of energy can invade your soul. That is the real struggle. The cancer attacks your very being, who you are. That can’t happen. Your faith is all you have. Your hope is all you have. Your prayer life is all you have. If your situation drains your energy from your soul, your situation is dire indeed.

God is energy. Your God can fill you up. Your God is there to make you strong no matter what your body or mind is going through. If you are strong in your soul, you put up a barrier to all that is trying to make you weak. Look to Jesus on the cross. He cries out in pain and sorrow. You can identify. He can identify with you and what you are going through.

Often we read when Jesus is on the cross, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” The words come from Psalm 22. “Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.” His words are your words. But pray the words of the entire psalm as Jesus alluded to while he was suffering on the cross. The psalm doesn’t end with the first verse. It continues, this very same psalm: ”I will tell of your name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you sons of Jacob, glorify him. And stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried out to him.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

Jesus opened his soul up to the energy of his Father in heaven. He would not let his distress corrupt his soul. He was a person of strength, of faithfulness, of hope, and of trust.

We pray that you may be likewise.

Cancer can cripple us and maybe even kill us. It can strip us of our energy from the diagnosis through the cure. In our weakness we cry out, “O God, my God why have you forsaken me?” In our strength, we cry out “I will praise you.” Cancer - it cannot kill our spirit, kill our prayer-life, leave us lost and abandoned. Our God is with us, heals our soul, will not abandon us, but lift us up on eagle’s wings.

Open your heart to the Spirit of strength and energy. Open your heart to the full. Jesus was given to us and he suffered. He was like us in all things but sin. His heart and soul was ever with his Father in heaven no matter what. Jesus has shown you the way. No matter what life throws at you, know in your heart that God will walk with you, energize you, love you. He knows what you are going through and will see you through it. Your God is Emmanuel, God is with us. Take courage. Be stouthearted, all you who hope in the Lord!

Amen. Alleluia.

1. Revised second version, Second Catholic edition, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)