

“A Word of Hope”

By Edgar Solís

This week has been different. People are getting more and more anxious and many are experiencing not only uncertainty but fear. During the week as Christine and I were working on the sanctuary a troubled man knocked desperately on the main doors of our church. I went to see what he needed. He was very anxious and I could tell he was not mentally stable. It sounded to me that the coronavirus crisis had affected him in a critical way; he wanted someone to listen to him and needed to be heard. I listened but I have to confess it was scary. As I was listening, I was praying. God had given me the opportunity to listen to that troubled man but what he was telling me was totally incoherent. I listened but in the end he just left.

All of this makes me wonder how many people out there just desperately want to be heard. How many others simply need a word of hope during this difficult time?

A Bible commentary says that today’s Gospel reading is superficially about illness, healing, and sin, but when we take a deeper look we can find the meaning of God’s message. We all know the coronavirus is now ravaging the world and it’s worth underscoring that the gospel story opens with Jesus rejecting the idea that illness is punishment for sin. This is a healing story, but as we’ll see, it’s also a call story so we can listen to it with “ears to hear” what kind of community God is calling us to be in these difficult, disorienting times.

Scripture:

The disciples ask Jesus, *Is that beggar over there blind because of his own sin, or his parents’ sin?* The disciples assume the reason for the man’s blindness is sin however, Jesus rejects this assumption out of hand. *His blindness has nothing to do with sin at all*, he insists. *Think of it*

another way: not as a result of some sin in the past, but rather as an occasion for doing “God’s works” in the present and future (John 9:3).

Sometimes we like the disciples are so preoccupied with the questions of past sin that we miss opportunities to do and witness “God’s works” here and now. At its core, this is a story about Jesus creatively, gracefully healing and calling an excluded outsider to be his follower. I can see that Jesus values everyone especially those who need to have someone listen to them and offer a word of hope. If we miss that essential storyline, we’ll miss the point. More importantly, if we misinterpret the world around us in similar ways, obsessed with inessential controversies, we’ll miss the opportunity to share Jesus’s hope and grace for all who need to hear something different. What kind of community God is calling us to be in these difficult, disorienting times? I believe that we are called to be a community sharing the presence of Christ with everyone. Let’s be conscious of that and remember that social distancing will not defeat the strong spiritual nature of the body of Christ here on earth. The Church will prevail and we’ll be better, stronger and united. I invite you to think of these hardships in another way. Jesus reminds us that they are not the result of some sins in the past, but rather as occasions for participating in “God’s works” of amazing grace here and now. Amen!