

# HOMILY ~ FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

## APRIL 29/30, 2023

There was a man named Douglas who was a licensed psychotherapist. He gave up a very lucrative practice working primarily with wealthy patients to work in the inner city with poor people who did not have access to mental health care. Shortly after he made this change, his wife was diagnosed with Stage IV Breast Cancer and began very aggressive treatment. On top of this, his family was involved in a car accident when they were hit by a drunk driver; and Douglas had a very serious head injury that left him with double vision. He had a difficult time walking and was unable to read. Douglas was speaking to his Pastor about all that happened to him, and his Pastor asked him: *“I know you are a man of faith, but you must be very disappointed with God. How do you cope with that?”* Douglas thought for a few minutes and then he said: *“I do not think I have ever been disappointed by God. I learned a long time ago that you cannot confuse God with life. Life is unfair. My life has been unfair. What happened to my wife and my family has been unfair. But I think God feels the same way. Don’t confuse God with life.”*

In the Second Reading today, we hear: *“If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God.”* Douglas was definitely doing what was good. He gave up a lucrative practice to work with the poor, and now he and his family were suffering. That just does not seem fair. Douglas said that he does not believe that God gave his wife cancer. We do not really know for sure why she got cancer, but illness and death are part of life. We cannot blame the accident with the drunk driver on God. The drunk driver has a free will, and God allows us to exercise our free will; but God did not cause the accident. When we are suffering, God is right in there suffering with us. Jesus certainly understands that life is not always fair. Was life fair to Jesus? He did nothing but good during his life in a human body and ended up suffering a horrible death by crucifixion for our salvation. Was that fair?

At this point in my life, I thank God every morning for sustaining my life and health and giving me another day. I thank God for bringing me to St. Edith, where I try to do good every day. That is God. I eat right, exercise regularly and watch my weight so I can continue to feel good and do my ministry. That is my part. But will this prevent me from dropping dead of a heart attack? No. Will this prevent me from going to the doctor for a check-up next month and getting a terminal diagnosis? No. That is life, and something like that is going to happen to me some day. Life is not always fair, but I cannot confuse God with life. I know that regardless of what happens, God will be walking with me. I know that God has put people in my life that will help me.

So where is the grace when life is unfair? When we dwell too much on the fact that life is unfair, we become a victim. I am trying to be a student rather than a victim. A victim says: *"Why did this happen?"* A student says: *"I don't care why this happened, what do I need to do to resolve this?"* Someone told me the other day when you get a flat tire in your car, if you focus on what caused the flat tire, you will be stuck there forever. You need to focus upon how you are going to fix the tire. A victim says: *"Why me?"* A student says: *"Why not me? How am I going to work through this?"* A victim spends so much time feeling sorry for themselves that they have no time for others. A student spends so much time helping others that they have no time to spend feeling sorry for themselves. When we are feeling down, doing something for someone else always makes us feel better. A victim begs God to remove the problems from their life so that they might be happy. A student knows that God will walk with them as they figure things out so they can gain wisdom. Life is unfair, but do not confuse God with life.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim