ARCHBISHOP: God is present in midst of stress

Continued from page 1

Turning from the stove, she walked over to the refrigerator, where his hand was still lodged with a glass in the dispenser. Gently taking the glass from his hand and looking him straight in the eye, she said calmly, “It’s not about the ice, is it?” She nailed him.

No, it wasn’t about the ice at all. It was about a bad day, a non-compliant patient, a feeling of failure, a sense of disappointment in himself, a lot of pent-up stuff that erupted in front of the Frigidaire. Once he told her what the day was like, he understood what was going on inside himself, and no, it wasn’t about the ice at all.

Finding the ‘off’ switch

His true frustrations on the table and soothe by an open ear, he could laugh at himself. And everyone could enjoy dinner.

I appreciated his story because we both understood how things can so easily get twisted within and around us, and how a nagging worry or family concern can leave us pointing fingers and blaming each other. And we didn’t even know why.

At times we are puzzles to ourselves. We ask why we said this or did that. Likewise, when a co-worker or family member thunders past us, leaving an angry cloud of dust in his or her wake, we wonder what’s going on inside.

I used to joke with a priest who served as principal of a high school that I could always tell when he had had a bad day because about 6 p.m. he would slam the door to the garage and start cleaning the rectory.

Apparently St. Paul surprised himself repeatedly. To the Corinthians he wrote about the thorn in the flesh that afflicted and exasperated him (2 Cor 12), and to the Romans he wrote, “What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate” (Rom 7:15).

Like the rest of us, he would have preferred to find the “off” switch to struggles within and without, but such a switch did not and does not exist.

‘Content with weaknesses’

For at least some of the unnamed stressors of the day there is a simple antidote: reflection. And for all of them there is God’s response, the same he gave to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

I learned a few years ago that when in the course of the day I find myself worried or irritable, aware of a shadow following me around, a moment of private reflection helps put things in perspective. I ask myself one question: “What happened today to create that cloud, to make me feel this way?”

Almost always I can identify something — an angry letter, worry about a loved one, a word spoken but later regretted — that I had been dragging through the day. Identifying it and asking God to shed his light on it, I get out from under the cloud and move freely through the day.

But there is also a kind of permanent life stance that Paul eventually learned to take, that of trusting in God’s strength and not one’s own. “I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:9-10).

The morning offering

There is a venerable Catholic tradition worth reviving, the “Morning Offering.” I learned it as a child, and I have lived in many rectories where the prayer was pasted on the bathroom mirror, as it is in Connolly House, the archbishop’s residence in Seattle.

“O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in preparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father.”

A prayer of self-offering takes the focus — and the burden — off ourselves. A day can so easily become all about “me.” By offering it to “Him,” we gain direction and focus.

Gradually we learn to recognize God’s presence even in the midst of stress, and we hear him whisper repeated, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

---

OFFICIAL

Lenten Regulations for the Archdiocese of Seattle

The penitential season of Lent begins Ash Wednesday (February 13) and continues through Holy Thursday (March 28). For this penitential season, the Church draws on the wisdom of the Scriptures and Tradition in keeping a time of intense prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During Lent, all Catholics are called to embrace penances and to perform works of charity that reflect a deep desire for conversion of heart.

Abstinence

Catholics in the United States are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all Fridays during the season of Lent. On these days of abstinence, the eating of meat is not allowed.

Fasting

Catholics are also obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. They are also encouraged to extend the Paschal Fast of Good Friday through Holy Saturday as well. Self-imposed observance of fasting on the weekdays of Lent is strongly recommended, as is abstinence from meat on all Fridays of the year.

Ash Wednesday is February 13, 2013.
Good Friday is March 29, 2013.

May our observance of these Lenten practices lead us all to a deeper union with Christ.

THE CHANCERY
FEBRUARY 7, 2013

AVISO OFICIAL

Normas para la Cuaresma en la Arquidiócesis de Seattle

El tiempo penitencial de Cuaresma empieza el Miércoles de ceniza (13 de febrero) y continúa hasta el Jueves Santo. En este tiempo de penitencia, la Iglesia se basa en la sabiduría de las Escrituras y la tradición para sugerir un tiempo de intensa oración, ayuno y limosna. Durante la Cuaresma, los católicos están llamados a practicar la penitencia y obras de caridad que reflejen un deseo profundo de conversión del corazón.

Abstinencia

Los católicos de los Estados Unidos están obligados a abstenerse de carne durante el Miércoles de Ceniza, el Viernes Santo y todos los viernes de Cuaresma. Los católicos también están obligados a ayunar el Miércoles de Ceniza y el Viernes Santo. Durante estos días de abstinencia no se permite comer carne.

Ayuno

Los católicos están obligados a ayunar el Miércoles de ceniza y el Viernes Santo. También se sugiere que prolonguen el ayuno del Viernes Santo hasta el Sábado Santo. El ayuno voluntario entre semana durante la Cuaresma es recomendable, así como la abstinencia de carne todos los viernes del año.

En un día de ayuno se permite una comida completa y otras dos comidas que no deben igualar la comida principal, pero que sean suficientes para mantener las fuerzas según las necesidades de cada uno. No se permite comer entre comidas, pero si es permitido tomar líquidos incluyendo leche y jugos.

La obligación del ayuno se aplica a los católicos entre los 18 y 59 años de edad. La obligación de la abstinencia se aplica a quienes tengan 14 años de edad en adelante. La ley no obliga si la salud o la capacidad de trabajar se ven seriamente afectadas.

Miércoles de Ceniza es el 13 de febrero de 2013.
Viernes Santo es el 29 de marzo de 2013.

Que nuestra observancia de estas prácticas cuaresmales nos lleve a una unión profunda con Cristo.

LA CANCILLERÍA
7 DE FEBRERO DE 2013