

SCREEN: blank red background

ME: At a recent church conference I was invited to take a personality test.

Anybody ever taken one of these? (hands)

They've been around for decades;

I took my first one when I applied for the seminary in 1976.

Each time I take a personality test, I'm reminded of what I already know.

I'm very task oriented....(*my staff will affirm this*)....

and I'm an introvert.

Yes, an introvert.

If you're wondering why an introvert became a parish priest

who has to preach to hundreds of people every week, you'll have to ask God.

And if he tells you, please let me know!

SCREEN: glass of water

When it comes to figuring out someone's personality,

this image can explain a lot.

If you say this glass is half full you're an optimist.

Say that it's half empty and you're a pessimist.

WE: After the events of last weekend,

I think even the most hard core optimist

is struggling right now.

We all dream of a day without violence and hatred;

a world safe for our children, our friends and our neighbors.

Is it possible or just a dream?

SCREEN: The Classics main screen

This is week seven of our summer message series titled,

The Classics.

The readings today told us how to have the world we all want.

GOD: Today's first reading from the Book of Wisdom,

talked about the life of the Hebrews in Egypt.

They were slaves forced to do Pharaoh's work.

They endured hatred, torture, back-breaking work and many of them died.

Then God sent Moses to lead them to the Promised Land.

Here's how the author of Wisdom described

the eve of their departure:

SCREEN: The night of the passover was known

beforehand to our fathers, that, with sure knowledge of the oaths

in which they put their faith, they might have courage. -Wisdom

The night before their escape,

they must have been terrified, must have wondered,

"Can we be free, is a better life possible

for us and our children?"

The answer was, yes!

Because God was with them.

They had faith in the Lord to lead them someplace new.

Their escape through the Red Sea was miraculous.

But make no mistake, they had to summon up the courage to

change their situation by taking the first step.

Jewish tradition teaches that the waters of the Red Sea

didn't part until the first person waded in.

By putting their faith into practice,

everything changed for them and for all believers for all time.

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In our second reading today from the Letter to the Hebrews,

we heard about the promise God made to Abraham;

told him he would be the father of a mighty nation.

But Abraham and Sarah were in old age when

God made that promise.

Their future seemed uncertain, yet they never lost faith.

And finally they bore a son....the first fruit of God's promise.

They knew God was with them and always would be.

By putting their faith into practice, they discovered that with God,
all things are possible.

And in the Gospel today Jesus told a parable
which has become a classic story of faith.

In describing servants in a household
awaiting their master's return Jesus said this:

**SCREEN: Blessed are those servants
whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival.**

Jesus was speaking of his own return;
His Second Coming.

He is the Master in the story, his followers are the servants.

Here are the questions Jesus's story raises for his disciples:

What will you do with the inexhaustible treasure I've given you?

Will you be obedient servants and build my Kingdom?

Will you put your faith into practice?

Or will you become lazy....or even forget my message?

These were vital questions asked of them and us.

Jesus is saying to any who would follow him,
*be a faithful servant, be strong and courageous
and you can change the world.*

YOU: As I said when I began this message,
our faith is being tested right now.

Our nation is in crisis and there are deep divisions.

We should be coming together to meet the challenges we face.

Instead, we seem to be turning on each other.

Rather than see what we have in common,
we're focusing on our differences.

And a few have turned to hatred and violence.

We know that hate is not the answer and
that violence is a dead end.

Division does not move us forward.

We must not resign ourselves to this being the new normal.

For disciples of Jesus, doing nothing is not an option.

We are the servants in Jesus's story,
and the Lord wants us to act.

The problems of today won't be solved easily or quickly.

But they can be solved; I am absolutely convinced of this.

Here's why I'm optimistic:

If God could make of Abraham and Sarah a mighty nation,
if the Lord could lead the Hebrews to the Promised Land,
if the followers of Jesus could take his Gospel to the ends of the earth,
God can use us to solve any problem.

But like our ancestors in faith, we have to act,
we have to take a step and wade into the waters.

So if you're tired of gun violence, do something.

If you're upset by the treatment of migrants, lean in to the problem.

If your passionate about ending abortion and helping women in crisis, get involved.

If it's the environment that worries you, then act.

If it's poverty in the inner city, or homelessness or any other issue
that stirs your conscience, step up, wade in, do something.

What can you do?

First start with prayer and keep praying.

Prayer is a powerful tool and for many disciples, the most underutilized.

And along with prayer, you can unite with others who share your passion.

You can join a group, you can organize, make phone calls, write letters,
donate your time and your money.

When life is threatened, faith demands a response.

The only unacceptable response is doing nothing.

This was Jesus's point at the end of today's Gospel when he said this:

SCREEN: Much will be required of the person entrusted with much,
and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.

He's speaking to us and reminding us of the faith he has entrusted to us.

The only way through the challenges facing us is by practicing our faith...
first in here, then out there.

There's a Catholic organization I've known about for many years called the Christophers.

They've dedicated themselves to sharing Christ's teachings with others.

If you visit their website you find this description of their work:

We believe that each person has a God-given mission to fulfill.

A particular job to do that has been given to no one else.

Love and truth come to us through God, but these gifts are not ours to keep.

By sharing them with others, each of us becomes a Christ-bearer,

a "Christopher" in the most fundamental sense of that word.

SCREEN: It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness

And here is their motto, it's one of my favorite quotes:

it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.

There are so many bad things happening right now - there is plenty to curse.

It is so easy to be pessimistic and only see the darkness.

But the Lord wants you to be an optimist, to know God is with you.

So let me ask you,

how can you be a Christopher, a Christ-bearer?

How can you bring Jesus's hope and healing into our hurting world?

What is one candle of hope you can light to dispel the darkness?

Any effort you make, *any effort at all*....no matter how small,

God will bless.

I challenge you to light one candle of hope this week.

WE: So to return to how I began this message,
as disciples we reveal who we are whenever we put our faith into practice.
It's how we take on the personality of Christ and
become the good servants in his story.
Let's resolve today to take a step, to wade in, and to change the world.
Amen. +