

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

03/25/12 5 Lent B

-- It would be awfully comfortable for a baby to remain in the womb of its mother. There, the baby's needs for nourishment are provided for, the temperature is ideal and everything is just fine.

-- But that's not where the baby is meant to remain. It has to break out of the womb. The process of birth is shocking and painful, for the baby and the mother alike. It's tough to have to breathe on your own, to cry when you're hungry, to be uncomfortable when you need to be changed.

-- Yet that's what's needed for the baby to reach his potential. He's opened up to a new world, other people and things, to colors and light. It's the only way for the baby to become a full human being.

-- This experience that every one of us had to go through can help us understand what Jesus is saying in our gospel. He speaks of the seed which must be torn apart for the plant to grow. The plant has to fight rocks, hard ground, and the top crust to bust out and bloom.

-- So, too, each of us must break out of our comfortable shell to attain the potential which God has for each of us. That can be painful, and even risky.

-- Jesus knew that. He understood that doing his Father's will would get him in trouble. Even in John's gospel, where Jesus is in control during his passion, he is troubled by thinking of what he will have to endure.

-- Many people have called this passage John's equivalent of the Agony in the Garden in the other three gospels. And what does Jesus say? *It was for this purpose that I came to this hour.*

-- In other words, going through what Jesus did was as necessary for him as coming out of the womb is for an infant about to give birth. Yes, it was painful, but it produced new life—for Him, and for all of us.

-- Followers of Jesus have lived that out over the centuries. I would like to put forth one person who is timely for our day. In February of 1977 Oscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador.

-- He was a former seminary professor who had been the bishop of a small, rural diocese. He was quiet and conservative. But, less than a month after his appointment, a Jesuit priest who was a friend of his was murdered. Romero asked the government to investigate.

-- He was ignored. That priest had worked with the peasants and had been branded as a troublemaker. From that point on, Romero became more aware of injustices in his country and began to speak out, particularly against the government death squads.

-- 32 years ago today(yesterday), Archbishop Romero was shot dead while saying Mass for a group of sisters. He could have remained silent and lived a long and relatively comfortable life. But he became the seed that died, and gave many people new life.

-- Our willingness to break out of a comfortable existence may not literally cost us our life. But it usually has a price. The young man or woman who pursues a possible call to priesthood or religious life may get strange looks and remarks from friends, neighbors and sometimes even family members.

-- A citizen who speaks up when government is not responding to legitimate needs can be branded a troublemaker. And a priest who speaks of local injustice or sinful behavior will likely receive criticism from some parishioners.

-- But if we remain in our comfortable wombs, if we choose to play it safe, we will never grow into the people the Lord wants us to be.

-- For our final call to die to ourselves will come when God calls us from this life. By then God will know...and we will know...whether or not we have been the seed that produced the fruit God wanted us to bear.