

Work of Art

2 Timothy 1:1-14

This last week a student at Rutgers threw himself off the George Washington bridge after roommates secretly taped him having sex and broadcast it over the Internet. One young life is gone and two others face prison time for a prank that (with the addition of access to the Internet) became a criminal act. Several students in Minnesota school districts and across the nation have committed suicide as a result of the bullying they have received. One senseless action by a friend, a roommate, a student destroys the sense of safety and value of our children every day. These young people no longer find meaning in life and chose a permanent and terrible solution.

In 1972, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel offered some advice that still speaks to us almost 40 years later: “Let them remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power and that we can do – every one – our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all frustrations and all disappointments. And above all, remember that the meaning of life is to live life as if it were a work of art.”

I thought of this statement when I walked pass this [PP2a] “Creating a Life that Matters” art piece from the first class that took the course several years ago. Part of the curriculum for this course is that you learn how the tapestry of your own life has woven a work of art in who you are and what you have to offer the world. [PP2b] The pieces of our lives can be woven into something beautiful or become frayed and tattered in a heap. **The difference between a pile of scraps and a work of art is what we do with the pieces. Sometimes people in our lives need help in seeing the work of art in their pile of scraps.**

Our reading from the second letter to Timothy shows us the power of the connection between two friends who cared deeply for each other. One was the more experienced writer who serves as a mentor to the younger recipient who is learning what it means to create a faithful life. There is such a tenderness of love shared between them – these two friends and

leaders. Timothy had his whole life waiting to unfold. He was now the brush that God would use to create a masterpiece. What would be the key for him to discern his life as a work of art waiting to be revealed?

It has been said that there are three kinds of people. There are those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder, “What just happened?” The letter to Timothy tells us to weigh our options on how we respond to the things that life presents. We can make it happen, watch it happen without us or wonder what happened.

This last week the Minnesota Catholic arch-bishop sent out DVDs to every Catholic household. The DVDs warn against the threat of marriage equality for gay and lesbian couples and encourage Catholics to vote for the candidate who will write discrimination into Minnesota’s state constitution. Besides it being morally repugnant that Bishop Nienstedt thought this was the issue that needed every Catholic’s attention – not poverty, not child abuse, not pedophilia among priests, not war – but marriage equality deserved the expense of producing and mailing 400,000 DVDs to Minnesotans, his endorsement of candidates who support this position amount to only one in the governor’s race which comes really close to a 501(c) 3 organization endorsing a candidate – something explicitly prohibited in the law. Perhaps some of you received the DVD. Maybe you have friends who did. Are you wondering what to do with them? **Well, I have a suggestion.** You can make things happen, watch them happen without you or wonder what happened. A staffer at the Basilica is making things happen. She is collecting these DVDs which contain institutionalized prejudice, violence, hate and heterosexism. She is turning these DVDs into a work of art. So, if you bring your DVDs to church, we’ll make sure they get to this artist for her work. When that piece is finished it will be presented to Bishop Nienstedt. When a bully abuses you, you can let it destroy you, you can wonder what you did to deserve it or you can turn it into a work of art. You can make something happen.

A work of art begins with a single drop of paint, a single chip of granite, a single step toward self-empowerment. **We have not been given a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline.** Our lives are

not determined by the actions and attitudes of others. Our lives are creative, amazing, imaginative, hopeful works of art imagined into existence through the Presence of God at work within us. There will always be bullies in this world – on the playground, in the college dorm, even in a miter and a robe. When you know at the core of who you are that you are precious to God – when you live that reality in how generosity flows from your life, then your life will be the work of art God created you to be.

It takes a first step – a first act. When you come up to communion today you will be invited to participate in a sacred ritual – a symbolic and physical way to enact the spiritual reality that is going on in our lives. A small drop of water-color will be placed on your hand. Let it mark you as one whose life in God's hands is becoming a work of art.

Sources:

www.homileticonline.com "Why Church? Reason Four: Mentors" October, 2010.

<http://www.albin-michel.fr/images/couv/1/0/1/9782226183101g.jpg>