

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle B-2024

In our Gospel reading, Jesus healed a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. Do you realize that we can bleed in ways that doesn't involve physical blood? We can spiritually bleed. We do this whenever we hide and run from God, place someone or something above God, or turn away from Him and His will in particular situations or seasons in our lives. If our conscience is well developed, we may feel spiritual bleeding through the experience of a healthy sense of guilt and varying degrees of alienation from God. If our conscience is not as well developed, we may experience a nagging restlessness, emptiness, boredom, and/or a crisis of meaning without understanding "why."

If we enjoy a close and intimate relationship with God, we can also feel like we are spiritually bleeding when it seems like God has abandoned us. We can experience this sense of being a spiritual orphan through dryness in prayer, a lack of a felt presence of God in or outside of prayer, and a lack of progress in growing in virtue despite our continuous efforts.

Those that the Church consider saints and spiritual masters assure us that God is always present and active in our lives. In those moments when God seems so far away, they promise us He is closer to us than ever before. He is inviting us to a deeper level of faith by seeking Him without the primary motive of experiencing spiritual consolation. For some people, these spiritual feelings can become like a drug. Instead, we seek God simply because we love Him, and we trust in His love for us.

During an earlier period in my spiritual journey, I reached the point where prayer itself was an experience of spiritual bleeding. It was because I went into prayer with the expectation that I had to feel the presence of God or receive some type of insight. Most of the time, I did not. Through spiritual growth, I discovered that I was being highly unrealistic and overly idealistic. I learned I cannot twist God's arm. Over time, I began to have no expectations during prayer. I realized it was all about loving, thanking, and honoring God, and allowing Him to love me, even if I feel nothing. As a result, I now look forward to my time with God. This spiritual wound has been healed. Every now and then, I feel His presence or get an

insight or revelation. I really do enjoy and savor those moments, but I don't expect or depend on them. I found that once I gave up on trying to control God in prayer, I was more aware of His presence and action in my life outside of prayer. That's my confirmation that God always shows up in prayer.

We can also emotionally bleed. This is when our hearts feel like they are bleeding because of emotional pain. It may be caused by conflict, rejection, abandonment, or betrayal. It can also be caused by abuse, injustice, or some type of loss. Emotional bleeding tends to have a strong relational component since harmonious and loving relationships weigh heavily in our experience of joy and self-love.

In our experience of emotional bleeding, there are two temptations that are important to avoid. One temptation is to always live in our pain. In their song "Get Over It," the Eagles sing: "It's like going to confession every time I hear you. You're making the most of your losing streak. Some call it sick, but I call it weak. You drag it around like a ball and chain. Wallow in the guilt, wallow in the pain. Wave it like a flag, wear it like a crown. Got your mind in the gutter bringing everybody down. Complain about the

present, blame it on the past. Get over it.” Even though the language is too harsh and direct, in a jolting manner, it reminds us that we can sometimes overidentify with our pain. We excessively live in our pain when we always obsess about it in our minds and always talk about it with other people. If we are not mindful, we can get sucked into the quicksand of an ongoing pity party that can become a nightmare for ourselves and those around us. Even though it is healthy to talk to God and others about our emotional pain, it is important that it does not become our only topic of conversation and our whole identity.

The second temptation is to always blame other people for our emotional pain. In the same song, the Eagles sing: “I turn on the tube, what do I see. A whole lotta people crying don’t blame me. They point their crooked little fingers at everybody else. Spend all their time feeling sorry for themselves. Victim of this victim of that. Get over it.” Even though these words are also over the top, in a shocking manner, they touch on how we can embrace the victim mentality that is so prevalent in our society today. They remind us that is healthy and mature to take full ownership of how we may have brought about our own pain through our

personal choices. Even when the emotional pain is visited on us by other people, we are called to take full ownership of how we handle it. By playing the blame game, we often excuse ourselves from the hard work of handling it, and seeking to overcome it, in a spirit of faith, hope, and love. We can even use it as a justification to inflict emotional pain on other people since hurting people tend to hurt others.

Whenever our hearts and souls are bleeding, Jesus Christ wants to be there for us in a spirit of compassion and empathy. By continually bringing him our pain, whether self-inflicted or not, we open ourselves up to the graces of His comforting, strengthening, and healing love. It is important for us to be patient and stout hearted, because this type of healing takes time. As the healing journey unfolds, we will be better able to resist or move beyond the stumbling blocks of self-pity and the blame game. With a forgiving heart, we will forgive ourselves for creating our own mess. With a forgiving heart, we will forgive others for the mess they created for us. With a humble and contrite heart, we will ask God to forgive us for using the victim mentality and the blame game as crutches against healing in a healthy and holy

manner. As Don Henley sings in the “Heart of the Matter:” “There are people in your life who’ve come and gone. They let you down. You know they hurt your pride. You better put all behind you, cause life goes on. You keep carrying that anger. It will eat you up inside. I’ve been trying to get down to the heart of the matter. But my will gets weak, and my thoughts seem to scatter. But I think it’s about forgiveness, forgiveness. Even if, even if, you don’t love me anymore.”

May we find spiritual and emotional healing through the transforming and saving power of forgiveness.

