**Working With God and One Another, We Will Win the Battle**

Once upon a time, two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally, it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few day's work," he said.

"Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there. Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber curing by the barn? I want you to build me a fence – an 8-foot fence – so I won't need to see his place anymore. Cool him down, anyhow."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town for supplies, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing.

About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped.

There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge… a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other. A fine piece of work handrails and all – and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched.

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge, after all, I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I have a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."

The author of the story is unknown, but it gets to an important point: namely as humans how our divisions can cause a problem, thanks to the Devil trying to divide us more and more.

In this week's first reading, we hear of Moses on a hill, interceding for the troops so they will win a battle. Moses, however, needs a little help in this, for we read that as long as his hands our held up Israel has the better of the battle. However, he can't do it on his own. When Moses 'hands are lowered the Amalekites get the better of the fight.

These are the first people Israel battles outside of Egypt, and we can kind of see them as symbolizing our ongoing battle in the world on our own journey to the promised land, namely that just as Israel had more battles ahead, so do we. Such is the fight against evil. The battle is ongoing. So how do we keep our hands up? We trust that Jesus goes with us into battle to fight our enemies. But we persist through prayer, through growing in holiness, through taking steps daily to become better, but working with others is so important to be people of hope - for we need one another and of course God to keep our hands up.

People help us in so many ways; namely to keep up the good fight by helping us to not face our struggles alone, and sometimes challenging us a bit, but also we work with one another to be people of hope. We all need one another's help in the battle against evil, but also when we work with one another, we change this world for the better.

Where we see the work of the Devil is where he works to create intense division. And I'm not talking about the kind of division that is necessary and even good; where we have legitimate differences of opinion on politics, or roles played in the Church, or the differences that make us unique. Rather, it's the kind of differences that lead to hate, that starts as a slow burn, then gets stronger and stronger. We see it all the time in our world, and sadly even in our Church, and of course in our souls. This is where we need to be aware of what's in our heart; of the slippery slope that can lead to hatred; or when we become stubborn and refuse to ask for help when we need it.

Though the carpenter managed to build that bridge in a day, and the battle was won by the end of the day, as we all know the battle is ongoing. Sometimes it wears us out - but we are never fighting alone, for God is with us as are so many great people. Our battles are those against sin, the battle against feeling isolated in life, and the battle to make this world a better place. It's a true multi-front war - but one we are never battling alone. As Paul tells us "be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient," for when we do, we can work with Jesus to find the way to the Heavenly Kingdom and help one another to do the same. In the Eucharist, we encounter God's love in action, given to us time and time again out of love from the God who never stops loving and feeding us for the battle. May that love transform us as we transform the world.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul