

I suspect I am not the only one who experiences this...but when someone calls me, or wants to see me, or approaches me my innards tighten and I become tense. I assume, in the dark corners of my mind, that the person wants something or is going to complain about something; or the person is going to bring me bad news (especially when it is a Bishop).

Now to be honest, usually when someone does want to see the priest, it is not always good news. Like a doctor, I don't set up an appointment with him to meet him and say "Hey, all feels great! I just wanted you to know!"

Still...it happens to me as Bob, not just Fr. Bob.

Simone Weil, an early 20th century French Philosopher, wrote about our encounters with people. The vast majority of us, as we are with others, impose a judgement on them; we place our egos onto them. We assume we know them and what they are about, and what they want.

Yet, that is not the ideal. Because as we do this, we inhibit the true person from coming through and therefore knowing the true person is also inhibited. We do not let the moment speak to us, rather we try to define the moment. This is not only with other people, but in a vast array of experiences we may have.

The ideal is to not judge, not assume, not impose...simply experience and see the person we are with (and vice versa); to have the experience and let the experience speak to us.

This ideal is very difficult to achieve.

A man is born blind, so the disciples, symbolizing their culture, their community, immediately judge the situation. They impose what they think has happened: he either sinned or his parents have sinned, and therefore this is divine judgement.

Jesus sees differently. He experiences this man as a person, one in whom God works through, not punishes.

Jesus' healing challenges the conventional wisdom of the people. It is a challenge for them on how they, how we, see others and this world.

We can see how people react to this challenge. There are some that want to see the goodness in it, but it is so difficult because it is so extraordinary. Others refuse to see the goodness, only the evil, because how dare a healing take place on a sabbath. They are too locked into what they assume they know.

As much as people complain about meetings, especially priests, I find more often than not, I am challenged to see differently. And sometimes too, I can challenge others in how they see a situation. Openness creates opportunities for growth.

We can become very comfortable in our routine, in our way of doing things, in our perceptions of the world. Parishes can be especially vulnerable to this... oh no Father we have always done it this way...

We make assumptions about groups of people, categories of people that lock them and us into patterns of treatment... oh, this person has a spanish surname, so they must like this or that.... This person wears a red cap, so he must be like that... She wears a tie dye tee shirt, so she must be....

Making assumptions, pushing our agendas and egos are all part of the human condition, but we must not become slaves to this condition.

Jesus calls us to be aware of our lives, our choices, and our actions. His very death and resurrection challenge us in how we know God. I will ask people God's action to the death of Jesus; did he punish or forgive? Many will say punish, and then I ask how? There is no answer. They assumed God punished humanity for this great crime, yet the Resurrection reveals God's infinite capacity to forgive.

We disciples of Jesus, choose, or supposed are to choose, to see beyond the superficial, to see past our biases, our egos, our ignorance...and see persons. When we can see past all of this, we are more likely to see the hand of God at work.

Jesus will do this time and again. He does not see only the sin, or sickness, or stranger...but a person open to God's love.

If we were to sit and reflect on our own personal conflicts, our divisions within, our own approach to people...would we find fear, pride, selfishness, ignorance...? Would we find that we assumed we knew?

Or can we find a capacity to see beyond it all; see people of faith, and see God?