

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

**Thursday,
March 30, 2017**

By Jim Martin

A few weeks ago I had the occasion to travel back to Portsmouth, VA, for the funeral of a friend. Rudy was really more than a friend. He was in many ways a mentor for me. He encouraged me to become a high school and college football official. For the last ten years that I officiated, Rudy was our crew chief.

I am embarrassed to admit that I did not maintain contact with these friends as regularly as I should have after we moved to Rocky Mount. Those of us who did make it to the funeral were able to renew old friendships and catch up on the news about others.

As I drove back down Hwy 58 and I-95 that afternoon, I could not help but think about the hours we spent traveling those highways and other roads to games in Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, D.C., and occasionally to other states. The conversations during those long hours of travel covered about every topic you can name and many times turned to conversations about our faith.

We were a diverse crew, not only racially, but politically and in our faith experiences. We respected each other for what we individually brought to the crew on the field. We knew that the other five always had your back. Likewise, we became respectful of each other's opinions. We learned from each other, we commented, we agreed, we disagreed without being disagreeable and judgmental, the latter being the more difficult for most of us humans, myself included. We gained additional respect for one another's opinions as a person and not only a crew member on a weekend trip.

I have been told that a knowledgeable person once said "It is very difficult to listen with your mouth open." I would suggest that we should begin to talk to each other and stop talking

at each other. Then perhaps we may hear the voice of God who may be speaking to us through a conversation with another person.

I offer the following poem which was in the Order of Worship for Rudy's funeral. I believe the poem has a significant message for us, not only in that setting, but at Easter when we celebrate the resurrection of Christ who himself gives us the strength each day to smile, open our eyes, love and move on toward the day that we will see Him.

You can shed tears that he is gone,
Or you can smile because he lived.
You can close your eyes and pray he will come back,
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him,
Or you can be full of the love that you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live for yesterday,
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember him and only that he is gone,
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on.
You can cry, close your mind, be empty, and turn your back,
Or you can do what he would have wanted:
Smile, open your eyes, love, and move on.
—Author unknown

Prayer

Teach me to listen, O God my Father, to those nearest me—my family, my friends, my co-workers, my neighbors. Help me to be aware that no matter what words I hear, the message is, “Accept the person I am. Listen to me.”

Teach me to listen, my caring God, to those far from me— the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

Teach me to listen, O God my Mother, to myself. Help me to be less afraid to trust the voice inside, in the deepest part of me.

Teach me to listen, Holy Spirit, for your voice — in busyness and in boredom, in certainty and doubt, in noise and in silence.

Teach me, Lord, to listen. Amen.

—By John Veltri, S.J.

Luke 4:14-30

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.