

Convent 2016

Luke 13:10-17



We are told that the woman in today’s Gospel Reading had been bent over by a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. All her life she had been living in “a posture of forced humility”.

There are so many ways we get bent over. Certainly too much work is one of these - always trying to please, to make the grade, to meet the deadline. Today, Sabbath-keeping is no longer a societally - imposed rule. Since we're such workaholics, maybe we'd be better off if it still was! Thank God that at least Jesus was not a workaholic! He regularly withdrew from the crowds, and from healing, and teaching in order to get rest, and he was refreshed enough to go back into the fray. He said he did not come to abolish the Sabbath! In today's world where work is often the primary drug of choice, it's perhaps all the more important that we keep a Sabbath too.

But people aren't supposed to have to go through all kinds of hoops in order to keep the Sabbath either. Keep in mind

that some of the schools of famous rabbis in Jesus' day discussed, and disagreed, about the question whether even an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath could be eaten! Rule-keeping for its own sake was never Jesus' thing. Clearly some rules are meant to be broken - or, should I say, bent? People weren't created to keep the Sabbath, the Sabbath was designed to keep the people! To keep bent people from getting way too bent out of shape, out of balance, out of sync. That's why when they asked Rosa Parks, why she wouldn't get out of her seat on that Montgomery, Alabama bus, she replied, in effect, "Because I don't think I should have to!

And also...Because Jesus healed on the Sabbath!" In interpreting best ways to keep the Sabbath, you see, Jesus was

willing to bend, or to break rules. Like Rosa Parks.

Something else to be noticed in today's gospel story: the angry Pharisee does not approach Jesus directly with his complaint about his Sabbath rule - breaking. Rather, he talks about it to everyone else; he's all bent out of shape, and seeking reinforcement; so he addressed his complaint to the wider crowd. It's a bad habit still common today. Some call it gossip. Some call it 'triangulating.' It might happen when someone is upset with the Priest, or with someone else, but they don't go to the one they're really upset with. They 'consult' with everybody but the person they're upset with. Jesus discourages this. Before you get bent out of shape about something that's irritating you,

address the concern honestly, with the person it most directly involves. You may end up being surprised as to how promptly, and constructively, the problem can be solved.

And to all of you who are primary or secondary caregivers: I can't help thinking of the words of a poem I like very much, but for the life of me cannot remember the poet:

*“We have the strength to lift and bear a friend’s immobile weight, the strength to watch, and nurse, and care, through hours long and late, because we trust in ways unknown, the springs of health are stirred, and thus the mind, the flesh and bone receive Christ’s healing word. ... Though we may lack Christ’s gift to heal, this task is surely ours: To bring to*

*Christ the lost who feel their need of gracious power.”*

There's a difference between getting cured, and being healed. Sometimes we bent ones who come to church don't get a cure as such. But every bent person can be healed and made spiritually whole.

It is the vocation of Christ's body, the church, to bring together the lost, the broken, the bent, and the hurting ones, who “feel their need of gracious power”. The Church is primarily a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.

*“If this is not a place where tears are understood, then where can I go to cry?”  
“If this is not a place where my spirit can take wing, where can I go to fly? If*

*this is not a place where my questions  
can be asked where shall I go to speak?  
If this is not a place where tears are  
understood, where shall I go, where  
shall I go, to fly?”*