



"Forgive them- they know not what they do"

BY
ELIZABETH PILGRIM

ANCHOR MY DAYS WITH MORNING AND evening prayers. Between these times of prayer, I am seeking God in all things, because He is the Creator of all things. However, sometimes I run up against challenges in my pursuit of God.

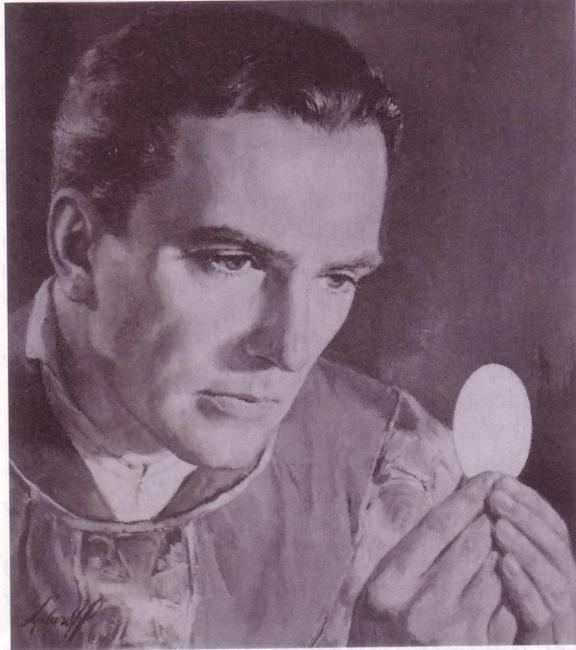
I remember conversations I had with two younger Catholics that reminded me that I am no longer a young adult. Surely, upon reaching middle age, I am hardened to the world. But I learn that I am not hardened to unexpected challenges to my faith from unexpected directions, like from younger Catholics, who grew up in a more secularized world than I did. The Second Vatican Council was underway when I started parochial school. Jesuit priests were running our parish. The religious order of sisters who taught in my parochial school had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The sisters wore their black habits, until I was in the fifth grade. Then they slowly moved to dressing like the laity.

As I was getting to know one of those young Catholics, the talk turned to religion. I found out that this young person came from a devout family. Then this young person revealed having received the award for Student of the Year as a senior in Catholic high school. I was impressed. Then the bombshell dropped that shocked me.

She began a tirade against Pope John Paul II and his adhering to tradition and not accepting women as priests. This tirade stunned me. While I consider myself a modern woman, I do not have an issue with the tradition of an all male priesthood. I do not feel resentful that the priesthood is not open to women. It disrupted my composure to hear anyone find fault with Pope John Paul. I was a fan of him from the day he became our Pope, and took centre stage. I was still scratching my head trying to figure out why this student - a former Catholic 'student of the year' - had not learned why the succession from Peter is exclusively male.

Then there is another young Catholic that I know who is also from a devout family. This young person counts religious or former religious among the members of her extended family. Having reached the age of forty, this young person remained unmarried. She

lamented to me one day that married friends with kids were having marriage troubles and were separating. This young person turned to me and asked rhetorically how people, who are married a long time - like me - do it. My response was that marriage was about sacrifice. I wondered again that surely she knew this. After all, this young person was also a Catholic school graduate with religious among her family members. I recovered and reminded my young friend that we die to ourselves, to our self-will,



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and give ourselves in love to another.

Although both of these young Catholics made me aware of my reaching a middle stage of life, I remember Jesus remarking in the gospel about His disciples just not getting it. I reflect on the life of Jesus. He is totally without sin, yet the sacrificial lamb for the nation of Israel, and by extension, for us. In His obedience to the Father, and in the spilling of His blood, He ushers in a new covenant. It is in the slaying of His body, spilling the blood, and the ascension into Heaven that Jesus manifested Himself as Israel's long awaited Messiah. Be careful what you ask for, Oh Israel, because you just might get it!

So often life dashes our expectations. There are people among us who pick up their crosses every day. I remember one of those unsung heroes. I can still see him in his cassock and hear its swish when he passed by. He was the pastor of the Queens, New York parish of my childhood. He was already well along in age when I was a child but he was a legend in our parish. One day, someone noticed and