

# Believing is seeing

During Lent I had the privilege of leading a couple of evenings of reflection at St. Casimir in Canton. After one of the services, a lady told me about the parish during WWII. She said that right across from the church was a packing plant. Among the workers there were a number of German soldiers who were prisoners of war.

As you can imagine, they were subjected to a fair amount of harassment from some of the local young men. We as a nation were at war with Germany. And Germany had raped and pillaged Poland. You could understand the anger directed at these prisoners from a local Polish neighborhood.

However, the lady telling me the story said that her grandmother tried to protect the prisoners from some of the harassment. "They are only young boys", she would say as she would shoo the hecklers away. "They are only young boys!"

I was deeply moved by that story of that simple, good lady. She could have joined in the revilement. She could have joined the crowd. But she didn't.

She didn't see Nazis who had pillaged her homeland. She didn't see German soldiers. She just saw young men, men likely involved in a war they didn't want, and had no part in starting. She saw young men. Perhaps she imagined her own grandsons or friends in a similar situation and might have hoped that someone else in another country would have defended them.

I tell the story because I want to honor the memory of this anonymous lady. No doubt she would never have dreamed that her simple words would be remembered 70 years later. She is one of those countless anonymous saints of every time and age who do the right thing because it is the right thing.

True it is easy to be biased by our own mental and psychological conditioning. We can be conditioned to think in certain ways by our cultural prejudices and our societal biases. We are all influenced by the environment we live in. But our Easter Faith gives us a way out.

We use the expression that "seeing is believing." It may be truer to say that

“believing is seeing.” Those who believed in Jesus before his death were able to see him after his resurrection. Those who did not believe did not see the Risen Lord. Others could see an empty tomb. Believers could see the Risen Jesus!

Another expression that I like is: “It’s not what you look at but what you see!” Others could look at young boys and see Nazis or German soldiers. She could look at Nazis and German soldiers and see young men!

It’s interesting, liturgically, that we have six weeks of Lent dying to ourselves as preparation for sharing in the death of Christ, and seven weeks of Easter Season trying to understand the resurrection of Christ. These are not just events we celebrate but events that are meant to change our lives.

Believing is seeing. People who look for the best in others and the best in life see that. Those who look for the worst in people and the worst in life see that.

But Easter is more than just looking at life with different psychological lenses. Easter is looking at life with graced lenses! We not only get to see the Risen Lord, but we get to see life as the Risen Lord sees it! The same Jesus who would die forgiving his executioners would be the Risen Jesus whose first words to the apostles who had abandoned him were: “Peace be with you.” To see peace instead of conflict, to breathe forth forgiveness instead of judgment is to look at life through God’s eyes. A Polish lady modeled that years ago. Our faith makes a difference.