

## Witness in Weakness

While many people, including some of those closest to me, find this unlikely, I am quite self-



conscious. When I am in front of others or in the public eye, I fear making mistakes either in the spoken word or the actions that are part of any task. I am embarrassed by slips, inadvertent mistakes or appearing to look silly or foolish in front of others. When these things inevitably occur, I imagine people gasping, snickering and talking about it among themselves afterwards. So this journey through cancer, where so much of my weakness is apparent, has been a difficult one.

I am convinced that my journey through cancer is a call to give witness to God's goodness in suffering and weakness. My prayer and reflection have led me to the decision to carry out my pastoral duties as long as I

am able, and to do as much as I am able to do as my disease progresses. That means that my weaknesses will be more apparent and public. I pray that God will give me the courage and strength of faith to share with you the great blessings of this last part of my journey.

Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus' in today's Gospel takes place at night. Nicodemus is attracted to the message of the Lord, but he is reluctant to have his awakening faith publicly known. He feels vulnerable and afraid, and so only explores his emerging conviction in the shadows of the night. However Jesus declares that he will be lifted up before all in suffering and weakness to reveal the almighty power of God. Jesus lifted up on the cross before all people will bring us to salvation. Through his suffering on the cross Jesus will bring the power of God's compassion to fulfillment, and save us from sin and death. This is the challenge Nicodemus' faces. Faith, hope and salvation will come not in the shadows of the night, but in the revelation of God's power in suffering.

Last Monday, I entered into hospice care. At this moment I do not need much help, but the time is approaching when that will no longer be the case. Depending on how and where the cancer progresses, in the near future I will begin to need more help, and to experience the ravages of this disease. My doctor has told me that I have about three months left in this difficult journey.

God has been so good to me, and he has blessed me with a confidence in his promises as I face this sometimes sad and difficult road. He has filled my heart with longing for his presence, while at the same time I ask if it is not possible to find a different path with a different ending. I ask the Lord to help my suffering in hope and faithfulness strengthen all of us as we journey through Lent towards the mysteries of our Lord's death and resurrection.

I ask for your prayers on this journey, and I promise you mine in return. Together let us lift up Christ in our faithful witness in the midst of the uncertainties of life and the weakness of our existence. It is in our weakness that God reveals his power, and in our willingness to abandon ourselves to his plan that salvation is proclaimed.

***Fr. Tony Stubeda***