

**“FEAR NOT, YOU ARE INADEQUATE!”**

**SUNDAY ORDINARY 8 A**

**FOR FEBRUARY 25, 2017 – CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

Deacon Frank Williams

**“Do not be afraid.”** (repeat)

Those words appear in Sacred Scripture 365 times!

But I will admit that during this past week, I was afraid!

Usually, my preaching preparation begins on Monday of the week preceding the weekend Masses. Imagine my panic when Friday came and I realized that I had nothing, despite my preparation the past five days.

I began to question whether I was up to the task – whether I was adequate for the sacred responsibility of preaching. I worried about it – a lot. I admit that I became a “Martha.”

. . . and then, I came across a story told by Fr. Ron Rolheiser.

Some twenty years ago, while on a retreat, a young priest was assigned a spiritual director who happened to be an elderly nun. She proved to be a woman of rare maturity, providing the guidance that the young priest needed at the time.

Being young and intense,  
the priest too easily made a cosmic drama  
and tragedy out of every ordinary  
disappointment or setback  
and the nun challenged him with a wisdom,  
an earthiness, and a sense of humor  
that continually helped deflate  
the young priest's pompousness.

At one stage of the retreat,  
sensing the young priest had a Hamlet type personality,  
she gave him this little saying:

**“Fear not, you are inadequate!”**

I think about that saying, off and on,  
mostly at times when I have been a bit  
overwhelmed by my own inadequacy  
or have been,  
usually without a lot of success,  
trying to console someone else.  
There is a real depth in that little saying.

On one hand, there is a certain assurance in it.  
Whether you are a parent, a teacher,  
or simply a friend to someone in need,  
there are countless times  
when you come face to face with your own inadequacy,  
when you are helpless in the face  
of all that you should be doing.  
At times like that, it is important to remember

that God alone is adequate,  
that you are not God,  
and that God is more of a parent, teacher,  
and friend than you and I are.  
Obvious as this is, it is not always evident to us –  
just look at our history of needless worry,  
being angry, feeling overly self-important,  
living with ulcers, and being chronically overextended.

Great spiritual writers have always said this.  
For example, St. John of the Cross,  
in a discourse on spiritual direction,  
reminds directors that God is the real spiritual director  
and that they are only secondary instruments.  
That is also true for every parent, teacher, and friend.

God is the real parent, the real teacher,  
the real friend, who alone is adequate for that task.  
We are instruments, only instruments,  
maybe important ones, but, unlike God,  
by ourselves we are not adequate to the task.

**“Fear not, you are inadequate!”**

To accept the truth of that is actually a little prayer.  
It is both healthy, humbling and uplifting  
to accept the fact that we are not God  
and that we are not asked to try to be.  
When we are overly discouraged or overly inflated,  
it is because we have forgotten that simple truth.

In our opening prayer, we prayed that:

**“ . . . your Church may rejoice, UNTRoubLED in her devotion . . . ”**

You and I know how difficult it is  
to go through life completely untroubled.  
Maybe you, as I was, are worried about  
Some event that occurred this past week.  
Let me assure you:

**“Fear not, you are inadequate.”**

When we approach the Lord’s Table today,  
let those words be in our mind –  
and when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion –  
remember that He lives within us.  
He is always with us.

Let’s rely on Him to assure us that we can rely on God,  
who is “adequate” in all we encounter in our lives.