

4th Sunday of Easter – April 21/22, 2018 – Reflection – Good Shepherd Sunday

"The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone."

(The Acts of the Apostles)

It was the second spring of the New York World's Fair in 1965. My grade school was so close to the fairgrounds in Flushing Meadow that we often went there for class trips. When we'd go, groups of us kids would roam the grounds in packs, having fun, riding rides, even learning a thing or two. By that time though, the boys and girls in my class who had up till then been fiercely segregated were beginning to notice one another as being something other than icky, gross creeps. Boys were noticing girls, and we secretly hoped the girls were noticing us too.

So anyway, on one class trip to the Fair that spring, I was hanging out with my usual group of kids. We all got along great, laughed a lot, and I thought really hit it off. But one of the kids in our group was named Cathy Nagle. I gotta tell you, she was beautiful: golden blonde hair; bright blue eyes; a smile that lit up a room. She was already, even at her tender age, working in TV modelling and doing commercials. Oh, did I happen to mention, she was beautiful??!!! I was smitten.

Well, our group went into one of the pavilions where the ride was in a boat ... I think it was the Pepsi Pavilion and the Disney "It's A Small World" attraction. So, a miracle happened that day: wonder of

wonders, I found myself in a boat for two sitting right next to the goddess Cathy Nagle ... just the two of us ... all alone ... I took it as a sign from God ... thank you, Jesus!!!!

The ride was really kind of a G-rated Lover's Lane and as the tunnel got darker and the puppets incessantly sang "It's a small world afterall", I decided it was a pretty small world and so I made my big move: I put my arm around Cathy's beautiful shoulders. I envisioned her laying her head on my shoulder, a beatific expression on her angelic face, her mouth whispering in my ear, "This feels nice."

What actually happened was just a tad bit different: she jumped enough to rock the boat, looked at me like she'd just seen a clown in the circus, and began to laugh ... and laugh ... and laugh. I played along and pretended it was all a great joke, especially when she laughingly told our friends what had happened and how funny I was after the ride.

Inside, I was crushed and, between you and me, I didn't really think it was all that funny.

All of us, at one time or another, have been rejected: dumped or divorced; passed over or dismissed; belittled or laughed at; cut from the team or never chosen for the game; found wanting in comparison or lacking in brains or charm. We try to laugh it off. We say it doesn't matter. We claim we can't waste our time on such foolishness.

But down deep, rejection ... scorn ... ridicule ... hurts, wounds, leaves scars, even destroys.

Jesus was rejected by His own people.

Jesus was scorned by the holier-than-thou's.

Jesus was ridiculed by the ones who couldn't buy what He was sellin'.

Look at the Cross: the hurt; the wounds; the scars; the destruction. It killed Him!

But, He rose from all of that ... God raised Him.

But, He never forgot what it felt like, and when He sees all of that in me, He puts His arm around me and accepts me, sees good in me, loves me ... and I risk to lay my head on His shoulder ... and it's nice.

The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone of the Church, the touchstone for all of us broken, misfit toys. But in Jesus, my rock, I become not something to be thrown away, not something to be laughed at and dismissed ... no ... in Jesus, my rock, I become a living stone in the building of the Church.

I may be just one lowly brick in the structure, but standing on Him, my rock, I can aspire to be a tower, a temple, a cathedral!!