

In the 1975 British film, “Monty Python and the Holy Grail,” early in the movie, King Arthur and his page confront the Black Knight; who blocks their way and boldly states: “None shall pass.”

As the scene progresses, King Arthur repeatedly injures the Black Knight who continues to taunt Arthur, as the mortally wounded knight refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of any of his injuries.

That scene, silly though it may be, can serve as a parable of sorts for us.

No one likes to admit they have a weakness. Nobody wants to be the loser in a situation. In fact, we tend to do all sorts of things to avoid admitting that we’re weak or that we’ve lost or that we’re at fault. We create inner walls, attitudes of mind and spirit, sometimes even neuroses - just so that we can refuse to admit defeat. It seems we would rather lie, cheat, and steal - than realize that we have failed.

In the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us that:

The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness ...

Which is Good News - if we are willing to do three things.

First: we need to admit that we have weaknesses. If we are blind to our own deficits; we prevent God from being able to help us. Who needs a Savior if there’s nothing to be saved from? Our weaknesses can be built-in; they can be self-inflicted; or they can be something imposed on us by external situations.

If we refuse to recognize our spiritual weaknesses - then we end up cutting ourselves off from the grace of God and living a lie - we end up creating a fantasy world of our own making, where we are perfect and oftentimes are willing to do anything or say anything to enforce our falsely-perceived perfection.

Secondly: we need to be aware of our own weaknesses. It’s very easy to find weaknesses in other people, but finding our own faults can present an enormous challenge. Once we admit that our shortcomings exist, it most certainly would help if we could identify those weaknesses.

Not being aware of a weakness, for example, in a physical skill or physical strength can be dangerous. If we try to lift something that is too heavy - we might injure ourselves or maybe even hurt others. In the same way, failing to recognize our own spiritual weaknesses can damage our relationship with God, or injure us spiritually, or may even hurt those around us.

Finally: we need to be willing to let the Spirit of God fill us with the power of God - so that our weaknesses can be overcome with the power of His Holy Spirit.

There is no self-help book or program that can assist the human person better than a solid relationship with God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If we become aware of our weaknesses, but then look to fix them through the latest self-improvement craze - we aren’t allowing God’s grace or His strength to shine through where we are weak.

Weaknesses are difficult for all of us to recognize; but realizing that we have them provides an opportunity for us to turn to God to receive His grace and power.

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, God speaks through St. Paul and tells us:

My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.

So let us make an effort to know our weaknesses. Not so that we can feel bad about them; but rather that we might invite God to fill us - to fill our weaknesses - with His grace, made present in the perfecting power of the Holy Spirit.

Father David Jenuwine
Parochial Administrator
St. Mary (Alma) & Mt. St. Joseph (St. Louis)