

A Short Story – Allergic Reaction

Written for deacon newsletter Deacon Dispatch which is out of publication.

By Anonymous

I am being treated with immunotherapy, call it 'allergy shots', a protocol of weekly shots of many years. The theory is by taking a stepped and gradual approach a person can become desensitized to the allergens by being constantly exposed to small amount of the allergens (immunologic tolerance). I go week after week. Year after year.

One day I went to visit my daughter which she share with three dogs. Really friendly and lovely dogs. Well, I decided that 'by now' I should be able to handle it. So I let them do what dogs do, jump on me, snuggle and settle in right next to me, on top of me and underneath me. I blew up like a balloon. A severe reaction.

On my next visit to the doctor I told him the whole story, a bit exasperated too. He replied, "You suffered from **allergic overload**. When exposed to a sudden and large amount of an allergen the immunological tolerance therapy meets its limits. The body reverts to the reaction in the way before the therapy. Tell me, did it subside quickly?" Thinking back, yes. Although I blew up like in the past it did not last as long as in the past.

Our spiritual ministry requires of us a patient and understanding heart. There are times where the training is sufficient to keep any 'allergic' reaction we may have to the rude, ruined, disaffected, psychotic, aggressive, and illogical. There are limits. Know your limits. Give the rest to God.

In the second, third and fourth Advent gospel readings we can see this theme play out.

John the Baptist - saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Thankfully, John regained his composure / his purpose by relating the **common reality: the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

John the Baptist - When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Thankfully, John was open to a grace-filled divine answer: Jesus said to them in reply "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ... And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.

Joseph - Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Thankfully, Joseph was receptive to divine direction: The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,... do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.

John and Joseph did not allow their allergic reaction to win the day. Know when you are in overload.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Not So Anonymous

Postscript: On a recent visit no adverse reaction at all and the dogs were all over me!