

Murmuring is pleasant when a brook does it,

but when the Israelites murmur in Scripture, it's a sin.

Murmuring is a particular kind of gossip done not necessarily to destroy or malign a person, though it often does, but to sow seeds of discord in a family or community.

Constant complainers – we all know them. We all complain sometimes.

But I wonder if the constant complainers we would all name, would own up to it?

Let's fast from murmuring this Lent.

The Books of Exodus Numbers are filled with murmuring:

The Israelites murmured in slavery.

God freed them.

No sooner had the Israelites been freed from slavery in Egypt, they began grumbling again.

There was no water,

God gave them water.

The water was bitter.

God sweetened the water.

They were hungry.

God gave them manna.

Manna was boring.

God gave them meat.

Moses complains – I can't take these people!

God chose helpers.

Moses own sister and brother complained against him.

Scouts researched the promised land spread a bad report: too many people, it's no good. Return to sender.

Murmuring bubbled into rebellion at Kadesh and Korah

Murmuring brought plagues from God

Disillusion onto leaders

banishment from the promised land for many, including Moses:

God took the sin of murmuring very seriously.

I hope we're all already a little comfortable even before we leave the OT and listen for murmuring in our present day circumstances.

Advocacy is NOT murmuring.

Honest disagreement is NOT murmuring.

Asking a difficult question at a meeting is NOT murmuring.

Murmuring doesn't fix anything,

murmuring doesn't build a community up it sows discord and robs those members of families and communities the peace and tranquility they deserve and saps its strength.

Murmuring is cowardly and unimaginative;

it doesn't make constructive suggestions.

Murmuring is lazy;
it costs the murmurer nothing in time, talent or treasure.

Murmuring can be fact-free and anonymous it doesn't need to be true or witnessed and can't be confronted or discussed

Murmuring is hit and run gossip.

It's insidious and saps the strength of our church, our families, and our nation, our relationship with God.

Stop listen!

If you're perfectly quiet around the church, you can always hear two things the ocean, and murmuring – about something.

Local murmuring, broad strokes, you fill in the blanks:

Mass times, "gym masses", parking, music, homilies, money, stickers, the present pastor, the former pastor, the pastor compared to our non-diocesan weekend assisting priests; the rectory; the present PTA board, the previous PTA board, crying children, too much change, too traditional, the building project, the Bishop's Annual Appeal, the bishop, the diocese, our coaches, our teachers.

For any community murmuring is treacherous for a church community it is a sin.

Murmuring assumes the worst about anyone who is perceived as having the power to change something; and simply harps on those things which cannot be changed, for the moment or forever.

It kills initiatives, saps volunteerism, hardens and discourages leaders, sucks the Spirit and enthusiasm out of people – the HOLY Spirit.

We should be critical when necessary, register the complaint, suggest a solution. Be realistic about receiving a "no." And then either continue advocacy or be quiet. But we shouldn't murmur.

What does murmuring sound like with God?

My prayers are never answered.
I'll do this if you give me that.
I'll never ask for anything again.
If you love me...
I don't get anything out of Mass or prayer.
After all the good I've done...
Thanks a lot...
Why me?

Constantly putting God to the test is the undercurrent murmuring.

A heart-opening, spirit filled lament to God is NOT murmuring.

Asking God repeatedly for something is NOT murmuring.

Murmuring usually takes place outside the context of prayer altogether.

We murmur to others why we don't pray, no longer attend mass, no longer have faith or trust in God, or eternity, aren't sure about heaven or hell, don't trust the teachings of the church.

Let's take a murmuring inventory of ourselves.

Don't murmur about God, pray to God.

By now, we've all heard Reinhold Niebuhr's "Serenity Prayer," to which I've added a coda:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
the courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference

and then the humility to stop murmuring.

If we can eliminate some of murmuring about others, and clear it out of our relationship with God, we all will celebrate a more joyful Easter.