

The 3rd Sunday of Easter — May 5, 2019

Wowwe are in the Post-Resurrection Period now, and look carefully at these Readings. The 1st Reading from the Acts of the Apostles is pretty powerful. Peter and the other apostles have now come out of the darkness, out of hiding, and are proclaiming the Good News powerfully. What in the world has taken hold of these men, who just such a short time ago were totally terrorized?

At the Last Supper, they were astonished. In the garden, they were unable to stay awake with Him. At the trial and Crucifixion, they were unavailable for support or for comment, save for John at the foot of the Cross. After His death, they were 'holed-up' — terrified of what was going to happen next. Now, they are fearlessly proclaiming "The Kerygma" 'Jesus Christ is Risen, and Salvation comes through Him.' They have been thrown in prison, and told not to preach in 'that name!' "We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the Apostles said in reply, "We must obey God rather than men." From where did they get this 'new life' this courage, this fortitude? Peter's answer is: "We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has give to those who obey him."

The Holy Spirit is the difference maker. The Holy Spirit is the key. The Holy Spirit is the source of this new life for the apostles. The Holy Spirit is the source of new life for the Church that is coming into being. The Holy Spirit is still the only real source of the Life of The Church. So, where is that life of the Spirit evident in the Church in the modern world? Where is the Holy Spirit evident in the life and work of St. Paul Catholic Church today? This is a really important question for us in our community.

On this coming Wednesday at 6:00 p.m., our bishop will be here to confer the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit on our young people who have been preparing now for 2 years. What difference does that make? Can we pray for a real outpouring of that Spirit for them and for our Church? I invite you to come and pray with us, with our bishop, and with our young people this Wednesday evening! Some people would naturally say, why should I come, I have nobody in that class for Confirmation? Oh yes, you do! These

are our Young People, the family of St. Paul ... our future leaders of this community! We all share in the power of the Holy Spirit with them. It takes great faith and great encouragement for the power of the Holy Spirit to come alive in a community. Hopefully we are that Community. Why not? — caring for ourselves, and for all of our brothers and sisters. It requires a lot of selflessness!

Later, some of our brothers and sisters will speak to you about our future plans, our plans for future expansion growth and development, and a Capitol Campaign they have designed for us in order to attain those goals.

But now, I would like to look at the Gospel. What marvelous insights we have into the idea of ‘a growing Church!’ It is after the Resurrection. The apostles are aware that Jesus, their leader, is risen. He has appeared to them on at least two occasions, but they are still not sure what this is all about, and what is going to happen next! It is such a simple setting Simon Peter and some of the others are together. Simon says, “I am going fishing.” ...maybe just going back to work after all of these happenings. The other disciples say, “We also will come with you!” After all, they were professional fishermen!

What a dramatic event unfolds:

- a.) They caught nothing all night (not good for professional fishermen)
- b.) There is someone on the shore (a charcoal fire and with fish)
- c.) “It is the Lord”says John
- d.) Have you caught nothing. Put out to the starboard. A huge catch
- e.) Come have breakfast !
- f.) None of His disciples dared to ask, “Who are You?” All of these ingredients are really worth looking at!

The miraculous catch of fish was a declaration of the Lord’s Abundance and symbolizes the mission of the apostles to be ‘fishers of men.’ The large catch shows how fruitful they can be with the Lord’s help. The meal symbolizes the Eucharist in which Jesus is present among them, and feeds them. Now, comes the very dramatic part that powerfully displays and celebrates the Lord’s Mercy. Peter’s failure, weakness, and denial was a very public deniala spectacle known to all of his brothers. It was well known, perhaps even his brothers had lost faith in him and his ability to lead them.

Jesus uses the occasion to provide a teaching on the Forgiveness He and His Father desire to share with us. A forgiveness that totally restores and renews the one who has faith! So, not once, but three times, He invites Peter to declare his faith and his love. How powerful is that! He did not want the power of His forgiveness diminished in any way. He wanted it known that His forgiveness was also total restoration.

Now, He has cleared the way for Peter to become the Leader, the Rock. Peter got it, and would later write, “LOVE covers a multitude of sins.” (1Pet.4:8) Still True!

—Fr. Gerry Hurley