

Ascension Sunday Year A May 28, 2017

St Peter's Parish was raised forty-years ago, to be witness of God's love in this part of the city. We remember the founders who erected this great parish whether they have returned to God or have moved on. The Twelve in our Gospel account today have become eleven, and have made their way full circle to Galilee. By the uplift of the Holy Spirit, they will raise alongside Jesus, a people stretching beyond and heavenward to God. The Apostles themselves are again on a mountaintop wondering, what next and will not wait long for their answer. But from this class, is a take home assignment. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Let's take a moment to examine this assignment's marking rubric, like any good student might.

First, we are to “go” the same we must do once dismissed from this place of worship. In other words, we can’t stay here, and we cannot remain idle. We must go. We’ll be back, bringing another week’s troubles and worries. Handing in that day or week’s efforts! But again, we must go on.

But what happens once we leave here? Well, we are to make disciples or students of not just a few, but of all nations. Oh no! we’re not teachers, theologians, or even very wise, you might say. That’s the bishop and the priest’s job! Well that true, but it is first and foremost the work of all the Baptized. This self-doubt sometimes strike fear in our hearts, even before reaching the parking lot. But if we are to be effective, message bearers, we must also strive to be the message’s subject matter experts. The Christians story is not one we can leave for the ignorant to proclaim. It is our experience, understood through the lenses of scripture and the Church’s teaching, of our encounter with God.

Our families, communities and nation must have this message proclaimed truthfully by each and every one of the baptized, who have imprinted on their hearts the Christian identity.

Each time we renew our baptismal vows, we commit to bringing to our families and communities a holy anointing, an elevated dignity clothed in white garments, hearts of an enlightened follower, and the living blessings of Almighty God. This is how we will teach and re-subscribe our world to the Gospel of Christ. Easter season is the time set aside by Mother Church to bring to mind the new Apostolic Baptism, characterized by an uplifting draft of fire. The fire of the Holy Spirit!

And so what does it mean when we say we are Baptized Christians or Catholics? Is there anything more critical to our eternal well-being, in these times, than living completely and fully our Baptismal vocation? Is there any place from where the freshness and joy of life gushes forth more abundantly than from the font of baptism?

There is great joy with each baptism we celebrate here in our own parish, as choirs of angels, and the communion of saints rejoice and open wide their gate. Those not standing on the shore, but who enter fully the river of baptism are necessarily swept in its current to the holy table of Eucharist.

When you think of your Baptism, if you are already, do you believe you have been enrolled, as a citizen of the kingdom of God? The Baptized are to spread these truths of our faith. Inviting and welcoming all humankind upon a journey with us into the deepest strata of the community of God! Don't be afraid! There is an infinite amount, we don't understand about the nature of God, but there is some our human faculties can grasp. For example, the Trinitarian formula we hear Jesus invoke today is the same repeated at all Christian baptisms. Why, because over the Jordan River, the sky opened up and the Spirit came down and a voice spoke from heaven saying. You are my Beloved and my favour is upon you.

Do you recognize in attendance at this Baptism? Father speaking to Son, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, recorded by the community!

We can be sure bringing the Gospel forward isn't any more popular today than it was for those first disciples. But if we don't tell our Christian story who will? Friends, we have the greatest news the world has ever known. Still, if as Christians, we don't shout our message from the mountain tops, the Gospel will surely fall silent. Bishops, priests and deacons have one voice, but so does mom and dad, grandma and papa, brother and sister, friend and classmate.

Today, it isn't the Romans we have to worry, will put us to the lions. Although in parts of the world, Christians blood continues to be shed. Blessed with physical security, we need to remember to pause and take deep breathes of Holy Spirit. The world is gasping for fresh breath and craving gentle waves of God's Love. A love powerful enough to cause the entire world to arise and take notice!

Vibrant witnesses we must continue to become, erasing all doubt that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are indeed alive and among us even until the end of the age! As so, let us be sure after the recessional movement reaches the Narthex, to pick up our assignments. Departing with a touch of baptismal water and a sign of the cross bringing God's Love to every part of our world.

Amen.