

Reflection for the 2nd Tuesday of Easter II

FIRST READING: Apostles 4:32-37

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the Apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the Apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need. Thus Joseph, also named by the Apostles Barnabas (which is translated "son of encouragement"), a Levite, a Cypriot by birth, sold a piece of property that he owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the Apostles.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 93:1ab, 1cd-2, 5

The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

The LORD is king, in splendor robed; robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.

The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

And he has made the world firm, not to be moved. Your throne stands firm from of old; from everlasting you are, O LORD.

The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed: holiness befits your house, O LORD, for length of days.

The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

GOSPEL: John 3:7b-15

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can this happen?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord.

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Each time I read this passage, that describes the Church as being of one mind and heart and holding all things in common for the support of all, I wonder how long it lasted. Was this the ideal Church, like the Garden of Eden? For it, too, didn't last long. In the letters of Paul, he related conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christians, rivalries between differing Church communities and competition between preachers and their messages. Did Luke idealize the reality of the early community? Today the Church of Jesus is divided. There are many independent and sometimes rival churches within the Body of Christ. We face the closing of three parishes to form one new one. Do we hearken back to the good old days with nostalgia or to our present with hope? We, in building the Church do so with the grace of the Holy Spirit with the Kingdom of God as our final goal.

Perhaps the entire Church could reflect on Luke's themes of unity, charity and support. Don't we all belong to Jesus first? His prayer was that we may all be one as he, the Father and the Spirit are one. The divisions between Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians may be of doctrine, ritual, theology and polity but we all have the same baptism, gospel and Spirit. For us, as our three parish communities merge, we are members of the Church before we are members of the parish. We are rooted in Jesus and in one another not in our locations. We, as believers can all say, "Christ is risen; truly he is risen!"

Today, Jesus has spoken to one of the two Irishmen mentioned in the bible, Nick O'Demus. The other being, "And Jesus taught Daley, in the temple." Yes, they are bad, but they are jokes I can tell in Church. I also believe that puns are the highest form of humor. We all need to smile. The first reading mentioned Barnabas, meaning son of encouragement. We all need to encourage one another too. That's how the Church can grow in Christ.

Nicodemus has a meaning too. Nike means victory and demus means people. John makes the use of such meaning. The victory of the people is in Jesus. Jesus' death and resurrection is our victory over sin and death. The man came to Jesus by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In seeking Jesus, he showed that he had been born from above. His confusion about the subject is commonplace. How often are we aware of our giftedness of faith? The Spirit works in us as we seek to live in Jesus presence. Jesus named the experience for him. Have we accepted Jesus' naming ourselves?

This gospel also contains Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection. He will first be lifted up on the cross before he is lifted up from death on Easter. Why does John mention a serpent? The serpent is both deadly and a symbol of new life. The serpent persuaded Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, as the bible told us, did sin enter the world. Because of the disobedience and sin of Adam and Eve, God sent Jesus to save us. Jesus became sin to save us. In many cultures, the serpent is also a symbol of new life and resurrection. In order to grow, the snake has to shed its old skin. The new skin is bigger and its coloration brighter. John has given us a neat symbolic image to digest in Jesus' prediction.

We meet the challenges of the Church and our membership in it by the grace of God led by the Holy Spirit. There will always be things that divide us. The past is always over and our future never arrives. We live in the present until we die and then live in eternity. The Holy Spirit has

maintained the strength of faith in Jesus until now. We now share in the new life of Easter. We seek Jesus as we gather together. Together, Jesus is in our midst. We know him in the Eucharist we share. Hope is the bird who feels the light and sings while the dawn is still dark. All is new in Jesus. He's only a thought away.

May the Holy Spirit carry us in Christ's mission.

James D. Beath

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