

**For The Bulletin Of  
April 10, 2016**

## **THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

### *From Father Robert*

Sometimes, people on diets figure that a good way to cut calories and lose weight is to begin early in the morning and skip breakfast. However, nutritionists tell us that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast gives us the personal jolt we need to get ourselves going with school, work, or whatever; a balanced, nutritious breakfast also jolts our metabolism and gives us energy. After the resurrection, the disciples need a jolt! They cannot return to their former way of living. They have encountered Jesus during His earthly ministry. Now they encounter the risen Christ and are invited to share in His ongoing ministry.

This Sunday's gospel is one in which the word "breakfast" occurs twice. This is the only occurrence of the word in all of Scripture! It is early in the morning – "already dawn." The right time for breakfast with all its advantages. The disciples have been out fishing and, upon returning to shore, Jesus asks them, "have you caught anything to eat?" Their answer was a simple, unqualified "No." No fish, no breakfast. Not so! Jesus invites them, "Come, have breakfast." It is as though Jesus knows the disciples need a jolt – they need to be tugged out of their familiar routine and transformed. They need the spiritual nutrition of encounter and belief for them to declare their love and follow with fidelity.

This gospel details the transformation made possible by the risen Christ. Disciples net a great number of fish after a catch-less night. Peter jumps impetuously into the sea instead of staying in the boat. Peter thrice declares his love, supplanting his triple denial – a love that is declared "when they had finished breakfast," after Peter is fortified by the gift of breakfast bread and fish, but even more so by the gift of encounter with the risen Christ.

The Resurrection transforms the way things are. The risen Christ transforms the way we are, enabling us to obey His ongoing invitation, "Follow me." We are fortified by Jesus' risen Presence, by His invitation to follow, by His own love for us that transforms our love into faithfulness and fruitfulness. Risen Life fortifies us for the transformation needed on our discipleship journey of seeing-believing. Risen Life is given to us by Christ, but we must also seek it. Risen Life is a gift, but we must also grasp it.

### *Living The Paschal Mystery*

Risen Life has its demand – we must eat breakfast with the risen Christ! That is, we must open ourselves to be fortified by all the gifts given to us so that our follow-response is energetic, sustained, and fruitful. Jesus gives us all the nourishment we need in order to meet the demands of daily discipleship. Accepting the nourishment that Jesus offers means that by following Him we ourselves become His risen Presence, those who lead others to Him. Every day we must take care that our actions announce Jesus' gift of nourishment at the same time that they speak of His goodness and care.

Leading others to Jesus doesn't mean doing big things; it means doing the little things well and so reflect the risen Life dwelling within us. It might mean once a week sitting down and having breakfast with our family. It might mean serving in a soup kitchen once a month. It might mean regularly contributing food gifts for the poor to be brought up during the Presentation of the Gifts at Liturgy. No matter what our act of love, or when, it always means saying "yes" to Jesus and to risen Life.

- What in me needs to be transformed by risen Life is...
- I encounter the risen Lord when... This encounter means...
- At this point in my life, following Jesus is leading me to...

***About Liturgy: Eucharist Is God's Gift Asking For A Response***

Each time we share in the Eucharistic banquet we are invited to be aware of God's gracious gifts to us. The gift of Eucharist is already a share in Christ's risen Life. By eating and drinking Christ's very Body and Blood, we are transformed into being more perfect members of the Body of Christ. This means that we follow Christ more perfectly since we are more identified with Him – follow Him even to "where we do not want to go." Thus, the gift of Eucharist requires of us a response in kind. Jesus' gift of self to us means that we respond with the gift of self to others.

Far from a privatized action, Eucharist is the action of the whole church through which we share in God's abundant Life and are called to bring that Life to others. Integral to Eucharist is a call to love and just actions on behalf of the

whole world. One way to evaluate the quality of our Eucharistic celebrations is not simply focusing on the elements of the rite itself (as important as that task is), but by focusing on how Christ's life is lived in the community. If the liturgical assembly doesn't become more loving, more charitable, more just by receiving Jesus' self-gift of heavenly food, then clearly those celebrations are not doing what they are supposed to do. Suitable questions to ask by way of evaluation: How do we visibly love one another more? How are we making a difference in our neighborhoods, city, nation, and world? Do we relate to the general intercessions as universal prayers, prayers of the faithful that extend beyond the celebration of Eucharist and demand a commitment of life from us?

***A Powerful Message***

Each week, my priest-colleague, **Fr. Ron Schmit, Pastor of St. Anne Parish, Byron**, writes an introduction to his bulletin in the form of a letter. I want to share the letter from last Sunday, The Second Sunday of Easter. It reads as follows:

Christ is Risen!

I have heard enough confessions where people, both young and old, express their doubts about their Catholic and Christian faith. Doubt is an important part of our faith life. I believe that doubt can be the doorway to a new and deeper faith. Easter is an invitation for us to go to new places beyond logic, beyond emotionalism, beyond rational thinking. Easter is an opportunity to enter a place beyond our wildest imaginations into a place of beauty, goodness, and peace.

Easter means that God makes all things new.

What do we doubt? Often it seems that for many people the Christian story makes less and less sense. Science and technology seem to have answered things that were not too long ago mysteries. We used to explain those mysteries by appealing to faith. Psychology is offered as more trustworthy in responding to people in grief, terminal illness, addiction, and discerning important life choices than spiritual direction or the Sacrament of Penance.

Many of the Church practices such as excluding women from high levels of decision-making and ministry seem, by many, as unjust and antiquated in a world of women prime ministers, women presidents and women CEOs. Unscientific approaches to human sexuality compound the image of the institution as anachronistic.

Appeals to piety, dogma and doctrine (over the previous two pontificates and by many current bishops) do not work. They have turned the incredible story, of the love of God for humankind revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, into a boring story, badly told. We wonder why people are leaving and why there are few high quality candidates for ordination. Pious appeals to wanting to “get you into heaven” or the fear of hell is not going to form committed disciples of the Risen Lord.

The doubts that Thomas entertain are correct. The resurrection puts all that he knows about life and death into question. God is doing something new. The old world view can no longer hold our

imagination. God is working in our lives in a new way, here and now. The way Catholic/Christian teachings are often formulated no longer match the contemporary experience of the lives of people. They no longer correspond to the world in which most Catholics/Christians live.

The only thing that is going to restore Christian faith is to go back to the basic message of God’s mercy revealed in Jesus. That faith is not about learning doctrine. It is living life shaped by our direct experience of the mercy and love of God in the Risen Jesus. This is the point of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis invites us to find new ways of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. We do this by living his compassion and demonstrating it to all in need. So, let us move through our doubts to faith in the newness of Christ.

*Thank you, Father Ron, for such a challenging, insightful, powerful reflection. How blessed we are to have you as Pastor at St. Anne’s and as one of the cherished priests of our Deanery.*

#### ***Easter Cards for Archbishop Brunett***

Thank goodness that the Easter Season is 50 days! There is ample time to send Archbishop Brunett greetings for the season. Please send your cards and personal notes as follows:

**Archbishop Alexander J. Brunett  
Archbishop Emeritus  
Archdiocese of Seattle  
710 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98104**

***Antioch Womens' and Childrens' Shelter***

I hope as many of you as possible will join me in support of **Gary Kingsbury** as he presents the proposed Antioch Womens' and Childrens' Shelter Project to the Antioch City Council on Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting takes place in the City Council Chambers located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

***CROP Walk***

This year's CROP Walk takes place on Sunday afternoon, April 17<sup>th</sup>, leaving from St. Andrew's Lutheran Church on San Jose Avenue, at 3:00 p.m. Registration begins at 2:00 p.m. I hope you will join me for this annual event which raises money for various organizations that address hunger in the world as well as locally.

***Keep Antioch Beautiful!***

This month, in lieu of the regular monthly neighborhood cleanup, we are participating in the city-wide "Keep Antioch Beautiful" project. Residents are invited to go to a variety of sites to work together to clean up those areas and at the same time to beautify these parts of our city. Please see the flyer at the back of my insert today to learn how you can sign up and participate. The areas to be cleaned are:

- a. *Nick Rodriguez Community Center*
- b. *Antioch High School*
- c. *Deer Valley High School (groups from this check in site will be sent across the street to Prewett to address the trail.) This will also allow those that come to this area to go into the neighborhoods around DVHS. The proximity of neighborhoods is why DVHS was selected vs. Prewett as the location of the check in site.*
- d. *Turner Elementary*
- e. *Park Middle School*

- f. *Carmen Dragon Elementary*
- g. *Mission Elementary*

***Antioch Police Department Explorer Program***

The Antioch Police Department Explorer Program is a progressive and educational opportunity for young men and women between the ages of 16 and 21 who have an interest in learning about law enforcement. Our explorers are afforded the opportunity to learn more about law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and the community in which they live. Explorers are required to volunteer at least 10 hours a month. They perform various tasks such as scene security, traffic control, safety presentations, tours of the police facility, community events, safety fairs, and many other law enforcement related tasks. Explorers are allowed to "ride along" with officers during their shift. The program is supervised by sworn personnel who offer insight into the exciting world of law enforcement.

The explorers receive training each month in areas such as evidence collection, crime prevention, firearms, traffic control, community policing, and many other law enforcement related topics. Explorers also participate in a yearly competition against other police explorer programs.

**Eligibility Requirements:**

To become a City of Antioch police explorer, candidates must be at least 16 years of age and no older than 20 years of age at the time of application. Candidates must also possess a valid California driver's license, maintain a 2.0 grade point average, be able to volunteer 10 hours a month, and have a desire to learn about law enforcement.

***Fr. Griener Returns***

This past week I had an email from Fr. George Griener, S.J. He has been away as well as being swamped with work at the Jesuit School of Theology which has prevented him from being with us. I am happy and pleased to report to you that he will be with us the weekend of April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and then again on the weekend of May 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, The Solemnity of Pentecost!

***California 5K Walk-Run For Kidneys***

“Team Matthew” Ouimet invites our parishioners to join them for the “California 5K Walk-Run for Kidneys” on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon, Heather Farms Park, 301 San Carlos Drive, Walnut Creek. You may register at [www.ohf.org](http://www.ohf.org); Registration is FREE! The walk supports the Oxalosis and Hyperoxaluria Foundation.

***A Thank You From Bishop Cummins***

On behalf of all of us, I sent a beautiful arrangement of flowers to our Bishop Emeritus, John S. Cummins, for Easter. This past week, I received the following letter in acknowledgement of our card and gift:

Dear Father Robert,  
My thanks to you and to the parishioners for the gracious Easter remembrance. The delivery was enhanced by the graciousness of the transporter who has some Bishop O’Dowd High School connection. He handed over your gift with Easter joy. The bouquet is masterful. It has reflected the feast. Our living room is indeed joyful. Again, the thanks of all of us here. It is nice to be remembered. May I return Easter

wishes to you and to the parish for the entire season.

Sincerely, John S. Cummins  
Bishop Emeritus of Oakland

***Thank You***

...to our faithful volunteer parishioners who take responsibility for cleaning the church and parish hall each week:

**Rowena Cayaban, Mila Rodrigo, Jun Bajet, Angela Bueno, Mency Osborne, Cathy Romeo, and Steve Rojek.**

....to our volunteer parishioners who clean and maintain the bathrooms in the church and parish hall throughout the week: **Robert Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Harlan Young.**

....to our **counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week: **Mary Ng, Harlan Young, Karen Oliver, Barbara Jackson, Rowena Cayaban, Joe Fanfa and Bev Iacona.**

....to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week’s donations: **Bob Carvalho and Barbara Jackson.**

....to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Bob Carvalho, Carole Miller, Dave Costanza, Judy Quicho, Vangie Parrilla and Belen Farin.**

***Knights Make a Major Donation***

Last weekend on behalf of our St. Ignatius of Antioch Knights of Columbus, Grand Knight Bill Barbanica and Deputy Grand Knight David Simpson presented a check to Father Robert in the amount of \$10,000. These funds will assist with parish operations. In making the presentation, Bill thanked our parishioners for their ongoing

### ***Touchstone***

Several times a year, I receive a bulletin from the National Federation of Priests' Councils. The most recent edition arrived last week and included an article entitled "The Four Disciplines of a Smart, Healthy, and Holy Church" by Matthew F. Manion. Because I felt that it was right on target, I am sharing it with you here:

Do you know which department in the hospital is by far the most effective and efficient in fulfilling its mission? According to Patrick Lencioni, best-selling Catholic author and leadership guru, it is the emergency room.

In a hospital emergency room everyone is clear about their purpose – to save human lives. When someone comes in with a life-threatening trauma you don't hear the staff in the emergency room saying, "That's not my job," or "that's not my role." While it is clear that nurses, doctors, orderlies and staff all have specific skills and roles to play, in an emergency you see people pitching in and doing whatever they can to save that life. Any organizational politics or morale issues or indifference are forgotten in order to save a patient.

In order to create a parish and diocesan experience better aligned with the vision of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, we must learn something from what goes on in an emergency room and apply that to our local church. As Pope Francis said, "I see clearly that the thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle." Saving lives in an emergency

room is noble and important, but fulfilling the Great Commission and participating in the salvation of souls is even more crucial and is why the Church exists. Yet we do not always fulfill this commission with the effectiveness and efficiency seen in a field hospital or emergency room.

The Catholic Church, like many organizations is filled with very smart people. Our priests and bishops all have advanced degrees and are extremely learned individuals. Many parish and diocesan staff have years of practical experience and advanced study in their vocational fields. The church is blessed with excellent talent when it comes to catechesis, evangelization, worship, youth ministry, service and outreach and so many other areas. We have the most educated laity in history and there is a wealth of expertise in the pews and on some staffs when it comes to financial management, facilities planning, strategic planning, and people management.

Unfortunately, in today's world being "smart" is no longer enough. The reality is that the greatest barrier to an organization in fulfilling its purpose is not a lack of "smart" but a lack of organizational "health." Healthy organizations have minimal politics, high morale, high engagement, role clarity, and low turnover of key leaders. Yet most organizational leaders spend 98% of their time on becoming "smarter" and only 2% of their time on creating a healthier organization.

This is as true for the Church as it is for any other organization. We are always looking for the next program, the next course, the next initiative that will move

our people forward. And while those programs, courses, and initiatives are good and help people, perhaps we would have greater success and impact in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ if we spent more time on organizational health.

So many good and holy people who love the Lord have given their lives in service to the Catholic Church. Yet when asked what is most challenging in their roles or what are the greatest obstacles they face as a parish or diocese, 9 times out of 10, the answer has to do with organizational health. They are frustrated with a co-worker, with the shortage of people who care about their faith, with a lack of volunteers, or with a lack of clarity about what is expected of them. They may disagree with the direction of the local church or more frequently, the lack of direction in their local church. They may question the allocation of resources and disagree about what is most important. They are exhausted by the “turf wars” and lack of cooperation and collaboration among ministries, parishes, and diocesan departments. They want to belong to a smart, healthy, and therefore, holy Church.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, it makes sense that we would live disciplined lives as individuals, but that mindset needs to be expanded so that we also have disciplined corporate lives in the holy ordering of our parishes and dioceses. We have seen numerous examples of how a commitment to the four disciplines outlined below has renewed the life of parishes and dioceses. There is an energy and enthusiasm in these communities. There is a commitment to grow spiritually and to invite others to encounter the Lord

and grow in their Catholic faith. The sense of mission unites people and turns their focus outward in service to others. The People of God experience more of the mission and vision of Jesus Christ as it is lived out today in the Catholic Church.

Leaders who practice the Four Disciplines of a Smart, Healthy, and Holy Church:

- Build and Maintain a Cohesive Leadership Team
- Reinforce Clarity through Persons, Ministries, and Structures
- Over-communicate Clarity
- Create Organizational Clarity

### **Discipline 1: Build and Maintain A Cohesive Leadership Team**

Years ago, there was a diocese where the youth ministry office and the evangelization office worked together to plan a series of diocesan holy hours to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. They had lay volunteers lined up to get the word out, they had priests and parishes that agreed to host the first year’s worth of holy hours and the archbishop had a tentative date on his calendar to join them. Unfortunately, the youth ministry office and the evangelization office were in two different secretariats and their leaders were not part of a cohesive leadership team at the time. When the leaders heard of these plans, they immediately killed the concept because neither wanted the other to get credit for the idea.

While this is one of the more egregious examples we have seen, a lack of unity in the leadership team often leads to

decisions and actions that compromise or conflict with the work of the Church.

Jesus is the ultimate model of leadership and we need to encourage leaders of smart, healthy, and holy churches to follow His example. One of the first things Jesus did when He began His public ministry was to recruit a team of 12 apostles. He spent three years living with them, serving with them, and forming them for the ministry for which they had been called. He poured into them and developed them so they could carry on His mission with one voice.

Good leaders who want to more effectively shepherd and lead their local church should begin by building and maintaining a *Cohesive Leadership Team*. This team is recruited by the leader because of their technical competence for their given roles and because their gifts, talents, and interpersonal skills complement the gifts, talents, and skills of the leader. This is a team that trusts one another, prays together, engages in constructive conflict, commits to group decisions, and holds one another accountable. It acts like the team in an emergency room or field hospital with a lack of ego and unified commitment to the mission.

One of the more encouraging signs we have seen in recent years is the number of bishops and pastors who have made the courageous and difficult decision to build and maintain this type of leadership team. It takes time to think through the needs of the team and then to make the changes necessary to put a team like this in place. Once a leader has the right people, it takes more time to set them up and “charter” the team, so they understand their purpose, values,

behavior norms, ground rules, over-all goals and outcomes. That investment upfront pays huge dividends in the long run as you will not have a smart and healthy organization if it does not start at the top. The discipline to build and maintain a cohesive leadership team is the first key to creating organizational health, but by itself it is insufficient.

### **Discipline 2: Create Organizational Clarity**

I love to ask parish and diocesan leaders how many people they have in their parish or diocese. They usually reply with one of two answers – the number of people who go to Mass each week or the number of Catholics in their parish or diocese. Either of those answers reveals an understandable yet very dangerous misunderstanding. Canonically, the bishop or pastor is responsible for all of the souls living in a particular geography, whether those souls are Catholic or not.

It is extremely inspiring to see the shift in thinking when leaders embrace this responsibility. For example, one parish had 14,000 people living within its boundaries, 3,500 of whom were Catholic and approximately 800 of whom attended Mass each week. Mass attendance had been steadily declining for about 20 years and many in parish leadership were focused on how to meet the needs of the 800 so that Mass attendance would not continue to decline.

Focusing on declining Mass attendance is a good thing, but leadership had lost sight of their core purpose as a parish. When asked to prayerfully consider what it meant to be the Catholic Church for the 14,000 souls in their parish and not

just the 800 that came to Mass, their priorities changed dramatically. They rediscovered their call to evangelize and focused on becoming a people and a parish that would bring the love of Jesus to their community. They realized a need to grow personally in their faith so they could more effectively witness to others. They evaluated their service and outreach from the perspective of the 14,000 and reframed much of their communication and methodology to include the possibility of discussing how God was present in the ministry along with an invitation to follow Jesus.

In addition to the blessing of the ongoing conversion of its members, there were other, more measurable, results of shepherding the larger community. Over time this focus on being Church to the 14,000 led some of the Catholics who had stopped going to Mass to come back. Others who were not Catholic responded by joining the Church. The consistent decline in Mass attendance stopped and the number of people experiencing the grace of the Eucharist is increasing again. This happened because a cohesive leadership team was able to create organizational clarity.

Healthy, vibrant dioceses and parishes *Create Organizational Clarity* by definitively answering a series of questions regarding vision, values, purpose, and priorities. This helps parishes and dioceses clarify why they exist and what difference it would make if they no longer existed (purpose), how they make decisions and interact with one another (values), and where the Lord is calling their local community (vision). A key component in creating organizational clarity is to assess a

church's effectiveness in fulfilling five foundational ministries:

- \* Sacraments and Worship
- \* Education and Formation
- \* Governance and Administration
- \* Service and Outreach
- \* Evangelization and Vocations

While a particular diocese or parish might change the order or terminology, most agree these reflect their core, ongoing work. They know that they must attend to them, their mission is dependent on them, and others benefit from them.

When these five ongoing foundational ministries are understood along with the changing needs, opportunities, demands, and resources of the parish or diocese, certain pastoral priorities begin to emerge. The prayerful discernment of no more than three pastoral priorities at any time helps to create organizational clarity. These are thoughtful and discriminating initiatives that rise to the top of the church's leadership agenda for a period of 2-3 years. They become the driving initiative for action and leadership in service to the parish or diocesan vision and all other decisions are made with these three priorities in mind.

Limiting the pastoral priorities to three or fewer has several advantages. First, if everything is important then nothing is important and there will be a lack of organizational clarity. Second, most reasonable people in a parish or diocese agree on the top two or three issues that need to be addressed, but will disagree vehemently about what is number six or eight on the list. The objective is to focus on what unites and is most

important and tackle those first. The final reason for three priorities is that most people can remember three things. Three pastoral priorities will provide the focus and clarity that is key to organization health.

### **Discipline 3: Over-Communicate Clarity**

Research has consistently shown that most people need to hear a message seven different times and often in several different media before the message sticks. Experience shows that this is not true when it comes to the Catholic Church. People need to hear the message not seven times, but “seventy times seven” times!

When a parish or diocese has taken the time to build and maintain a cohesive leadership team, and that team has led the church in prayerfully creating organizational clarity about its purpose, values, vision, and priorities, the next step is to over-communicate that clarity. All leaders take on an additional role for the community as the CRO, or chief Reminding Officer. They need to consistently promulgate the vision and priorities in a variety of settings and forms. The work of over-communicating clarity is only done when everyone in the parish or diocese can easily articulate the vision and priorities and begins to make decisions in light of those discerned priorities. This point leads to the fourth discipline of a smart, healthy, and holy Church.

### **Discipline 4: Reinforce Clarity Through Persons, Ministries, and Structures**

The fourth discipline moves the vision for the organization from a concept to a reality. Many organizations who invest

in the first three disciplines can make a common mistake and sabotage their good work in implementation. The mistake is to announce the new vision and priorities and expect everyone to put time and effort into them in addition to everything else they had already been doing. The more effective leadership action is to help every person in the organization re-evaluate their roles and activities and align them with the vision and priorities.

Parish and diocesan leadership reinforces organizational clarity when it not only gives people permission to let go of certain things, but when it requires it. Our faith tells us that we must abandon the old ways of doing things in order to participate in new life-giving activities. This is true on a personal level and on an organizational level as well.

This will mean that certain activities, functions, and ministries will need to be stopped or at least put on hold for a while so that the appropriate attention can be placed on the discerned pastoral priorities. The parish and diocesan structures should support the priorities and may need to be adjusted to make the vision a reality. This requires courageous leadership from the bishop or pastor and unified support from the cohesive leadership team.

The Catholic Church is filled with very smart people who know how to lead and serve very smart communities to increase our effectiveness in carrying out the mission and vision of Jesus Christ. We must focus on becoming healthy as well. These four disciplines have been shown to improve the organizational health of a wide variety of parishes and

dioceses in the United States. The most important thing to remember is that the goal is not simply to be smart and healthy but to grow in holiness and help others in the field hospital to do the same. — *Matthew F. Manion, President and CEO of the Catholic Leadership Institute.*