

**For The Bulletin Of
February 4, 2018**



From Father Robert

Sometimes when children are excited and tell stories of their latest adventures, they can skip over details, jumping from one tale to the next. “And then” is a common conjunction joining these hurried sentences that quickly moves the narrative forward, often in fits and starts. The excitement definitely carries the story. The listener (maybe even a parent!) is often left wondering exactly what happened. There are a number of questions left unanswered, but one thing is clear: “This was exciting!”

Something similar is happening in the first chapter of Mark, indeed some would say it happens throughout the entire gospel of Mark. We see this excitement and hurried storytelling on prominent display in today’s reading. Though we have only a few verses, there are at least three distinct vignettes.

The action begins in Capernaum, where Jesus has been preaching in the synagogue. He and His new disciples (for they were called by Jesus only a few verses earlier) go to the house of the brothers Simon and Andrew. There, Simon’s mother-in-law is healed. A few things are clear: Simon (Peter) had a wife; and the extended family, including at least his brother and his mother-in-law

lived under the same roof. This is family togetherness that many middleclass people in the United States no longer experience.

This particular home must have been a welcoming place. Not only was it the location of such an extended family, but James and John were also with them that day. By evening it seemed the entire town was at the door! Jesus cured many of the townspeople before leaving early the next morning.

Though Capernaum formed something of a base for His Galilean ministry, Jesus still needed to get away from time to time as the last short story in today’s reading reminds us. But even a few moments of solitude were nearly beyond reach as Jesus tells His disciples that He came for one purpose: to preach.

The action and excitement covered in this brief period is palpable. In one sense it covers only twenty-four hours before concluding with a sentence that says He went throughout the whole of Galilee preaching and driving out demons. Jesus has a purpose and His followers are witnesses to it. It’s as though there is no time to spare, not even a pre-dawn moment to Himself, for that is filled with prayer. Excitement fills the air with the wonders Jesus does.

Living The Paschal Mystery

At times our busied lives can seem frenetic, simply moving from one activity to the next with barely a moment in between. We imagine “the good old days” when things weren’t so harried. It’s true that technology has perhaps increased our attention (or lack thereof) to many details, but time marches along at the same pace it always has for us.

Years, months, days, and even hours and minutes may seem to move more quickly than before, but in reality, it's been moving at a constant pace for many centuries. Most of us feel the pressure of time because we are driven by a purpose. There are things we need to do. And today we hear of Jesus driven by the same. He has something to accomplish. He has a purpose. Though He wakes before dawn to have some time to Himself, even that sacred moment quickly vanishes in the midst of the day's activities. Simply being busy or having things to accomplish is not a bad thing. In fact, it can be the opposite. Today we have a chance to reflect on what motivates us. For what purpose are we driven? Are we taking time to pray, brief as it may be? Even when we do find a moment of solitude, the needs of others come before our own needs.

What questions has today's Gospel raised for you? As Winter's Ordinary Time begins to draw to a close before the beginning of Lent, how has your understanding of discipleship grown and deepened?

- Have you known someone who, despite the pain and trauma he or she has endured, still manages to live a life of purpose and joy?
- Is there a "demon" that you struggle to "cast out" of your life?
- In what realistic and authentic ways can and should the Gospel influence such public arenas as politics, business, education, sports, and family life?
- How would you respond to Job's lament in today's first reading?

- Do you have a "deserted place" in your life where or when you are alone with God?



About Liturgy: The Purpose of Healing

When we pray for those who are sick and ask God for healing, we are doing an act of mercy. However, the hoped-for healing is not the end-goal of our prayer or of God's action. Jesus says it plainly in today's gospel. His purpose is to preach the Good News. When we or our loved ones get sick, good news is knowing that we are not alone, especially when we are at our most helpless. Sickness prevents us from doing the things we normally do. We cannot enjoy the ordinary pleasures of life, and we are separated from our circle of friends and colleagues. Illness disconnects us from life and from our community, and it isolates us from the world.

Remembering the sick, praying for them, and visiting them restores that connection. It brings the people who are sick, even if they are not physically present, back into the hearts and minds of the community. And when a cure is not possible, we can still continue to preach Jesus' good news for our loved

ones – that they will never be alone in their suffering. Christ is present, and we, the hands and feet of Christ, are present, too.

When recovery of health does happen, our mission to preach the good news does not end. The final purpose of healing is praise of God and service to God's people, because when the person returns to the community, "with their health restored", they may give God thanks in the midst of the Church." This is our service, our sacrifice and offering of praise. Like Simon's mother-in-law, who, when she was healed, waited on others, we, too, use the blessing of healing to serve those in need and to continue to preach the Good News of Christ.



“Lighting The Way”

Today I would like to announce that it is time for the Annual Bishop's Appeal in our parish and in our diocese. This is an annual appeal that assists our diocese in funding a variety of ministries, services, and programs that benefit many throughout the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa. This year's theme is ***“Lighting The Way.”***

Last year in 2017, our parish raised over \$31,000, 103% of our goal, for the Appeal. This year, our overall parish goal is **\$34,900**. I know we can reach that goal, and when we exceed it, our parish will receive 100% of all funds

back to us to address some of our own needs, especially the expansion of the parish hall and the renovation of the kitchen. A Gift to the Appeal truly extends to both our local community *and* the wider community. You will be hearing more about this year's Annual Bishop's Appeal and receiving information in the mail over the next few weeks.

I ask you to prayerfully consider these words: while this is our parish, our spiritual home, we are also part of a much larger, universal family and we have responsibilities to them as well. If we act together as members of one family united in Christ's love, we can realize and accomplish great things.

In order to reach our goal, I am asking each of our families to make a pledge or one time gift of \$60.00. With all our families participating, we will not only reach our goal, but we will actually once again exceed it! I realize that some will contribute more than what I am asking, others will contribute less, but what is critical is that we all participate. Even if you are unable to make a donation, you can pray for the success of the Appeal and prayers work miracles! Let's all do our part to support the Diocese and the Bishop to insure the success of this year's Appeal.



The Memorial Funeral Liturgy for Neil MacCallister

Our parishioner, Neil MacCallister, fell asleep in Christ last Sunday, January 28th. His Memorial Funeral Liturgy will be celebrated here in our church on Friday, February 9th, at 10:30 a.m., followed by a reception in our parish hall. Neil was fairly new to the parish but became involved almost immediately working in the Community Garden, constructing protective coverings for all the plants and raised beds as well as joining the Art & Environment Committee in helping to change the environment. He also volunteered to make all the repairs to the home of one of our parishioners who recently experienced a fire. He was 64 years old and is survived by his three children. Please remember Neil and his family in your prayers.

Shrove Tuesday – Please Remember To Return Your Dried Palms

Tuesday, February 13th, is “Shrove Tuesday,” the day on which we burn the dried palm branches from last year’s Palm Sunday and from which the ashes for Ash Wednesday are made. Please return your palms to the box in the narthex. They will be burned in a rite at the conclusion of the morning liturgy on February 13th.



Ash Wednesday, February 14th, marks the beginning of Lent. Our liturgies that day have been scheduled as follows:

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist with the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes

12:00 Noon Liturgy of the Word with the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes.

We welcome the parishioners of St. John’s Lutheran Church who are joining us for this service as they are currently without a pastor.

5:30 p.m. Liturgy of the Word with the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes

7:30 p.m. Solemn Sung Evening Prayer with the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes

There will be appropriate music at each liturgy under the direction of Don Pearson, Director of Music/Organist/Artist-in-Residence along with our Cantors and Parish Choir.

of U.S. Catholic Priests, calling upon Catholic bishops in the United States to enlist the aid of lay pastoral workers to administer parishes.

Passed by the association at its convention in Atlanta last June, the resolution calls upon the church to allow "well prepared pastoral ministers who, working collaboratively with canonical pastors, can know, guide and accompany the faithful on their journey of faith via parish communities."

The resolution urged that bishops employ lay workers, deacons and religious who are currently in pastoral ministry to lead parishes under the direction of ordained pastors, a framework allowed in canon law. These lay leaders and deacons should have "the flexibility to make ordinary decisions and actually lead the parish according to its gifts and needs."

The document envisions clusters of parishes, led by laypeople and deacons, who would make day-to-day decisions about their churches while reporting to an ordained pastor.

The priests' association urged bishops to provide more training for such lay leaders of priestless parishes. Such local leaders would enable parishes to minister to those who need pastoral care, including the sick and the bereaved, in a way that priest pastors, who are sometimes asked to oversee as many as three parishes at a time in some dioceses, are unable. The resolution stated that lay pastoral administrators should be paid a living wage, and be provided benefits and job security.

Lay leaders of priestless parishes, including women, can lead worship

services and perform the duties of pastors, with the exception of sacramental tasks reserved for the ordained, the resolution said.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University notes that the number of priests in the U.S. is now about 37,000, a decline from 58,632 in 1965. The Catholic population has increased from 48.5 million to 74.2 million in that time, while attendance at Mass has declined from 55 percent of all Catholics in 1965 to 23 percent in 2017.

Out of 17,156 parishes in the U.S., more than 3,500 have no resident pastor. Laypeople and deacons administer 347 parishes, according to CARA. Authors of the resolution from the priests' association said that the decline in clergy numbers and Catholic practice are related.

Fr. John Hynes, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Church in Wilmington, Delaware, was co-chair of the committee that wrote the resolution. He said the document is a response to the impact of an aging, declining-in-numbers priesthood in the United States, and the continued consolidation of parishes due in part to the lack of potential leaders. In 1965, there was one priest for every 1,000 Catholics, said Hynes. Today, there is one priest for every 2,500 Catholics. A third of diocesan priests are retired. At 78, Hynes said he is continuing in pastoral work, as the need is dire.

But continuing the status quo is not a long-term solution. "It's like we are cheating the people," said Hynes. "We need lay leaders in parishes to ensure

that the range of Catholic life is fulfilled."

Already, a number of dioceses are employing lay pastoral leaders. But the effort is not consistent. Sometimes lay administrators are dismissed when a new bishop is brought to a diocese. That is why there is a need for the body of bishops to explicitly endorse the concept and provide consistency, said Hynes. Msgr. Raymond Cole, a retired priest of the Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, and co-chair of the document committee, said it borrows from "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," a 2005 U.S. bishops' statement that encouraged lay pastoral workers.

But, he said, the concept "has to be opened to further growth and modification." In informal responses, bishops have responded favorably to the resolution, according to Cole. And some dioceses, such as Youngstown, Ohio, and San Bernardino, California, already use laypeople as leaders of parishes, consistent with canon law.

There is still resistance, said Cole, who surmised that those bishops who oppose the use of lay workers as parish leaders have not been heard from. That opposition is formidable.

"It's change. It's asking for a major shift in the way we do things," he said. But the resolution argues that inaction is dangerous.

"If USA Church leadership postpones dealing with this issue, the window of opportunity will slowly close. Then we will experience a greater collapse of parishes than we are currently experiencing, a loss of morale and health

among priests, and further decline of the morale and trust of people who depend upon us to meet their spiritual needs. As our Catholic presence diminishes, so will our presence in society in all of its aspects," it says.

[Peter Feuerherd is a correspondent for NCR's Field Hospital series on parish life and is a professor of journalism at St. John's University, New York.]



Our 6th Annual Crab Feed has come and gone. On Saturday we served 125 of our friends and family a meal that started with shrimp cocktail, salmon mousse, and then a delicious salad (provided by Brian and Vicki McCoy), garlic bread, and then 2 pastas, one with meat sauce (prepared by Rich Confetti, and one with garlic and clam sauce (prepared by Clem Bushman and Steve Rojek), and then crab (prepared by God). It was very fresh and flavorful.

After some fun and games, raffle prizes and some other giveaways, we served ice cream for dessert. It was a great evening with lots of compliments and even some folks wanting to make reservations for the next one.

All of this takes a great deal of support and hard work from lots of people – our thanks to:

Vince and Kathy Augusta, Bill Barbanica, Don Benson, Clem Bushman, Bob Carvalho, Rich Confetti, Noel Fortez, Jack Goncalves, Tony Gumina, Rick Howell, Brian and Vicki McCoy, Kelly and Kristi Ouimet, Jose Palomino, Jose Perez, Bob Plurkowski, Fr. Robert, Steve and Frances Rojek, Steven Rojek, Walter Schlueter, Dave Simpson, Maryann Peddicord and Oscar Tellez. Thanks to our Confirmandi who did a great job as servers.

Thanks and more thanks to all of these, and to those who supported this event by buying tickets and coming to eat.

And let us catch our breaths - February 16 begins the Fish Frys!

Gratefully submitted by Steve Rojek