



With the celebration of Pentecost last weekend, we brought to a close the celebration of the Resurrection and opened the season the Church refers to as “Ordinary Time.” Ironically, we are living in a time that’s anything but “ordinary.” Nevertheless, we are experiencing an “opening up,” coming out of the cocoon spun by the scientists and politicians who tried to protect the nation from the life-threatening Coronavirus. The coming of the vaccines is changing our cooped-up life into the freedom of living together again. And we are rejoicing in the life we haven’t had in over a year.

I find this change a parallel to Pentecost. The disciples, out of fear of the pain and possible death they could receive from those opposed to Jesus, huddled together in the Upper Room. Their ordinary life was taken away from them by the Passion and Death of Jesus. They experienced the overwhelming joy of seeing Jesus alive, but they were still afraid to go out in public. With the coming of the Holy Spirit all that changed. Suddenly, they found the nerve to open the door to that room, walk outside to the waiting crowd and talk about their faith in the newly risen Lord.

Looking through the eyeglasses of faith, can we see the Spirit emboldening us to open the doors of our parish and talk about our faith in the risen Lord in our life? This is exactly what *Renew My Church* is all about. Having been isolated for more than a year, we are once again coming together, relishing the feeling of being in church again. But we need to remember we have begun a change. My guess is that we’ve forgotten what it is we’ve been called to do, namely go make disciples. We need to get back to work embracing our call, deepening our relationship with Christ and calling others to discover that relationship in their own lives.

I know for us Catholics talking about our faith is at best awkward and at worst downright terrifying. We fear sounding like some tele-evangelist or some super-pious goodie two shoes. We’ve been told for so long that our faith is a private matter best talked about only with our confessor that we don’t even have the vocabulary to express our relationship with God. And, if we’re honest, we don’t want to sound like Evangelical Protestants. Bottom line here: our relationship with God that may not be that good or we’re not sure we even have one. This is why we need the Spirit to help us become “disciples” first. We need to hear we’re not alone in these feelings and that having these concerns is OK. We need a nudge to move beyond our fears.

The gift of faith given to us in Baptism was not a personal present for us to keep carefully on a shelf in the closet of our private lives. Confirmation was the call to share our faith with the whole world. This is a major change from what we’re used to doing and, as all change, it is uncomfortable or even scary. The older we are the more we don’t want to change. Nevertheless, the faith and the church is not *ours*; they are Christ’s gift to us given through the Holy Spirit so all the world can know the love God has for the human race.

Right now, our call to change is being embodied by the change of pastors. My time with you is swiftly coming to a close and your new pastor, Fr. Brian Kean, waits in the wings to take on the leadership of this parish. Things will be different in a short time. But this is a reminder that the Spirit is with this parish, leading you on to what Jesus wants you to be, *and the Spirit will not abandon you*. For over a month we have prayed that the Spirit would send the man this parish needs. Recently, we have continued to pray for the Spirit to strengthen and guide Fr. Brian as he assumes the role of leading the good people of this parish to where the Spirit wants us to be.

While “ordinary time” can sound rather less than exciting, it reminds us that this is *our time*, the time for us to get out of the building and proclaim to the waiting world of the strong commitment of God the Father to the human race through Jesus Christ and his resurrection...and if necessary, use words.

On our own we probably won't be able to do all this. We are sinners after all, but Pentecost tells us we're not alone in this building a new church. The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, will be walking with us step by step. God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - will work with us to build this new church. It won't be easy and it certainly will not be done overnight, but the love of God will get us through. Remember, God does not love us because we are good, God loves us because *God* is good. And that love can do anything.

*Fr. Denis*