

Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter

April 28-29, 2018

Readings: Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3: 18-24; John 15: 1-8

Preacher: Margie Benza

“You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.” A simple sentence and a revealing line which requires courage and offers consolation in the midst of this Easter Season. Our readings today remind us that the Holy Spirit continues to guide us deep within as a resource to call upon in those times when we are seeking truth, when we are called by God to go into the world and bear the fruit that has been waiting for our hands.

Do we possess the faith of Saul? The gift of this man in seeing the Lord after the resurrection was sure to fuel the fire of his heart—to the point of martyrdom. He ruffled feathers, made many uncomfortable and angry and brought solace to the people whose ears were ready to hear the Good News. Where are you on that path of sharing your faith?

So many times we find ourselves in complicated situations in our faith and in our spiritual practices when God is simply asking us to share our faith through our care of others. To be that quiet champion and accompany those who are hurting lost, weary or lonely....selflessly and trusting in the Spirit. Living our life “not in word or speech, but in deed and truth.”

During Lent we were called to fashion our own desert. To allow ourselves to be pruned of the temptations of our own weakness, vulnerability and loneliness. To relinquish our need for control. Only when we allow ourselves to experience the truth of our own brokenness, and cry out to our God in humility, can we enter into the healing presence of God and share that gift with each other.

From that healing experience comes freedom and courage. Freedom to offer a space of trust to the sufferings of our neighbor. To keep our heart and mind on Jesus. And courage to be present with them at the foot of their crosses; to sit with them with the caring eyes of Mary. To journey intimately with them in this sacred space of their cross where Jesus offers love, mercy, forgiveness and trust through our hands.

Our Easter joy continues as we hope for the continued consolation of the risen Lord and his command to “to do this in remembrance of me.” This brings me back to Holy Thursday and the gift of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper. The institution of that first Eucharist which Jesus so generously offered, the foundation of our faith, given freely in gift for us to remain in him.

In training Ministers of Communion, I offer the reminder that at the time of Jesus’ public ministry, people would fight the crowds with such deep trust and fervor just to get close enough to touch his cloak to be healed. I ask them, do you truly understand the power of what you hold in your hand after you receive the Precious Body and Precious Blood at Mass? Do we honor this command?