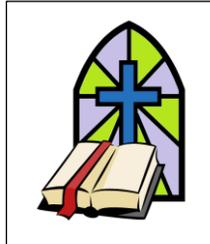


Scoop's #55, Sunday June 14, 2020

Good morning! Time to get out your Bible and worship with your brothers and sisters at St. Thomas, St. Ambrose, St. James , St. Stephen's and St. Mary Magdalene!



Sentence: The Spirit of Truth will bear witness to me, says the Lord; and you also are witnesses. (John 15: 26,27)

Readings:

Exodus 19:2-8a Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19 Romans 5: 1-8

Collect: Almighty God, without you we are not able to please you. Mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:35-10:8

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Sermon: A Sacrament for Rejection

A tourist noticed a wizened and well-tanned man riding a donkey in New Mexico. Nothing strange about that! But this man had a 200 pound sack of grain hoisted up on his shoulders. He was obviously having trouble with the weight of it. The tourist called to the man "Why don't you just strap the grain to the donkey?" And the man said "O I couldn't expect the poor old donkey to carry this

much weight”. Ridiculous, isn’t it? The donkey was already carrying the weight of the man and everything on him, including the burden of the wheat.



That picture speaks volumes to my heart. It’s a picture of how we often carry heavy burdens ourselves – especially burdens placed there by others – burdens like rejection, abuse and mis-use; labels and condemnations that strip us of our dignity and our worth. We know that we are to cast, throw, leave our burdens with Jesus but somehow we keep lugging them around ourselves. We don’t seem to know how to untie them from our own shoulders and place them on the ONLY ONE who really is strong enough to manage the weights and burdens of the whole world. In Matthew’s Gospel narration this morning, I believe that Jesus gives us a very practical way to do that. He gives us **something like** a Sacrament. An outward and visible sign of an invisible and inward grace. For this morning, although it is certainly not a recognized Sacrament of the Church, I want to talk to you about the **Sacrament for Rejection**.

Jesus is busy in His home town this morning – doing what He does best: teaching and equipping others to do ministry. He’s just come home from a wonderful, powerful time. He’s been teaching and healing: the tortured Gadarene demoniac, the woman with the hemorrhage, Jairus’ little daughter, and along the way He calmed a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee. He is also building His team; seeking and receiving and admonishing those who would become disciples. He is ministering first to the lost sheep of Israel. And now the time is ripe. He gathers His disciples and sends 70 (or 72 in the Greek) of them out to do as He has done...heal the sick, teach the people and proclaim the Kingdom of God. He tells them the fields are ready for harvest; there are people “out there” who will receive them and their word, but their welcome will not be universal. He also gives them traveling guidelines: Take no purse, no money, no extra shoes, and don’t waste time dilly-dallying along the way chatting people up. Stay where you are invited, eat what is placed before you, and don’t go looking for the best accommodation or wines. Offer a blessing of peace and do your ministry. If they receive you, well and go: tell them the Kingdom of God is very near. But if they

don't receive you, don't look back, go your way, and do this. Wipe the dust off your feet as a witness against them. . Jesus well knew the impact of rejection. In His self-emptying, taking on human flesh, Jesus was indeed like us...on a journey, like us little by little perceiving the Will of God, and like us vulnerable to hurts and unpleasant surprises. He could be amazed by people's unbelief. Rejection had hurt Him: that of His family, His home town, His synagogue and His people.

He never threw up His hands and stalked off. He kept on building the team He is sending out to do His work. He commissions and sends 70 (72 in some translations) of His followers off to prepare the Jewish towns and villages of the countryside for His coming to teach. Jesus will minister to the Samaritans and gentiles later, in different ways. He gives his disciples authority. He gives them instructions about what to do and how to do it. And He tells them to wipe the dust off their feet in the places where they are rejected. This is what I call the Sacrament for Rejection. 'When you go,' Jesus tells them, 'there will be people who reject you. People who won't welcome you or even listen to you. People who discount you entirely. And when they reject you in this way, I want you to wipe the dust off your feet as you leave town. Let them know that you will not carry even a speck of their rejection one step further. You won't accept their judgment of your worth. You'll consider whatever they fling at you like mere dust, and shake it off your feet and carry on without the burden of shouldering rejection.' (my paraphrase). Those who offended the traveling disciples were not condemned for not **believing**; they were condemned for not even being willing to listen, for not taking time to be hospitable. For their rejection of the human worth and dignity of the messengers. And for scorning brothers of their Jewish faith.

Dealing with rejection was important and Jesus of course knew all about it.

So do we. We've all experienced it, not in the same ways or to the same degrees but we know what it feels like. It feels like carrying a 200 pound sack of grain on your shoulders for your whole life. It can be the malicious rebuke of a colleague, the cold shoulder of a one-time friend, children who are abused or neglected, spouses who are battered, belittled or considered "less" than, people of all ages who are ignored and held to be invisible; the different, the difficult,

the unattractive ...ALL suffer from rejection of themselves as being worthy of love, care, attention, nurturing, and inclusion. Many, many cannot shake off that unworthy, unloved label. It is a lie, but it defines their life. Jesus wants to change that. This is the truth that He tells us: If anyone comes to Me I will never ever reject them and tell them to go away....I want you to have life and have an overflowing abundant joyful life...I love you in just the same way and to the same degree as the Father loves Me...You can do all things because I will strengthen you...You honour Me when you give Me your weakness, because that is what my Strength is perfect for...I will never, ever leave you and I will give you things to do that matter for all eternity. That is the truth. If we have to wear labels, we should be wearing stickies that say “Loved – Valued – honourable – worthwhile – cherished – Belonging”

If and when and whenever people say or do things that cause us to feel rejected, we need to reject rejection. Not let it stick to us. We can shake of the dust by wiping our feet and refusing to carry it one inch with us on our journey. Jesus Christ is our burden bearer ...He carries us like little lambs on His shoulder...and He is quite capable of carrying off and away whatever we give over to Him. The foot wiping is just an outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible grace of Christ who has already redeemed us and pronounced us holy and beloved in His sight.

Do you have a doormat at your house? Go where it is. If not, drop a towel on the living floor. Then, if you are struggling with rejection, or even just want to practice up for the rejection which is inevitably to come, please take a sacred moment and wipe your feet. Make the outward sign . Give the rejection over to Jesus. Put it in His care. You may need to do other things too– see a counselor, come for prayer, change some environments, whatever – but you can begin the process of inward healing with the outward sign that Jesus provided for His disciples. Wipe the dust off your feet. He is faithful. Amen.



Prayers:

For the Mission of the Church: Draw your Church together, O Lord, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving Him in His mission to the world; and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. We ask this in His name and for his sake. (BAS 676)

For our Concurrence Committee: Almighty God, giver of all good gifts, look on your Church with grace and guide the minds of those who shall choose a priest for these parishes of St. Thomas and Lake of Bays, that we may receive a faithful servant who will care for your people and support us in our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For all who suffer loneliness during Covid isolation:

Your presence, Jesus, makes the difference between aloneness and loneliness.
Your companionship quiets me.
A loving stillness encircles nmy being.
I can reside in my solitariness and not grow restless or fearful,
Knowing you are here with me, allows my spirit to be at peace;
To be alone without feeling abandoned
Because you are ever by my side.
Thank you for being my companion, my friend, and my Lord.
Amen.

Blessing:

Be steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.