

Eucharist and Mission
Third Sunday of Easter
4/29/07
Presented by Michael Fetsko

- Opening Prayer
- The Gospel reading of this Sunday is of the disciples fishing, and Jesus appears to them on the shore in his resurrected, glorified state. He tells them to cast their nets again, even though they've been unsuccessful all night, and they haul in so many fish – 153 – that their nets are stretched to their limit. Jesus prepares fish for them on the beach, and reminds them of their mission to spread his word. Recalls the Gospel: “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” [Matthew 4:18-19](#).
- As such, receiving the Eucharist at Mass is itself a beautiful experience, but it doesn't end at the table. We are from there called to Christ's mission to bring his message of salvation to the world. The word “Mass” comes from the Latin word “missa,” which means “to be sent.”
- The Christian life isn't self-contained. Each Mass ends with the words, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”
- In the first reading of this week, we find the apostles before the Sanhedrin – judges/leadership/chief priests of the Jews – who are reminding them not to preach about Christ. The apostles, though, “laugh it off.” They rejoice in the fact that they are suffering persecution on behalf of the Lord. Remarkable transformation from where they were just a short time earlier, around the time of Christ's death, when they lived in fear of being identified as his followers. Now, filled by the Holy Spirit, they have confidence and assurance and are spreading the word of God and glorying in their persecution. These are foundational moments of our faith. Apostles transformed from being more than just followers of Jesus, they are leaders of a new faith, introducing and baptizing people in the church.
- This shows that as Christians we must be willing to “participate in the cross.” Take on sufferings as somehow part of our salvation, no matter what we endure. Because professing God and faith doesn't mean that everything is going to be good and perfect in this life.
- Everybody is called to serve and “participate in the cross” in different ways, whether it's by word, deed, or by action. As St. Francis of Assisi has said, “Preach the Gospel at all times. And sometimes use words.”

The Eucharist

- Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Mass.
- When the priest is at the altar and affects the Eucharist, it literally becomes the body and blood of Christ. When the priest transforms the sacrament, it's almost as if it's a time warp taking us back to the foot of the cross as Christ offers the perfect sacrifice. This mystery is a truth of the faith that we pray about to understand as well as we can.
- It also evokes the Last Supper. What we do in Mass is more stylized and formal now, but it's essentially the same. We receive the first Eucharist of early Christians (apostles) as they received it at the Last Supper. And like the Apostles at the Last Supper, we have taken Christ on, we become more Christ-like, and we bring his truth out into the world.
- "Theosis" – a beautiful concept in Christianity. It means to grow into a likeness of God. We are called to be more divine and become more Christ-like. We go through a transformation little by little with all the sacraments, especially Eucharist.

Mission

- Mission is part of the completeness of Christian life. We're all called to live up to the mission.
- There are "many gifts, but just one Spirit." We must pay attention to how we hear God's call in our lives and how we are called to spread His word. We're all called in different ways, and none of them are "wrong" or "right"
- It should always be just a little bit more than we're comfortable with. More than just shaking hands at church and being good to others. The Spirit pulls us beyond our comfort zone. We have to have the grace to go along with it. A good analogy is to a workout at the gym. To grow healthier and stronger, it's about extending yourself beyond what you're doing now.
- The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) in the 1960s talked about the church as "the light to the nations." That is its role in the world. And this stems from the Mass and the Eucharist, which is central to the existence of the church and our mission.
- Pope Benedict has called the Eucharist both the "source and the summit" of our spiritual life. As Catholics, our faith is awakened by hearing God's word and nourished at the table of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not only the paramount sign of God's presence in our lives but is also the wellspring of our inspiration to live truly Christian lives. The Eucharist energizes our lives and serves as the root of our global community as Catholics.
- Pope Paul VI said we don't "undergo" the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. We don't receive them passively. We take them actively and are energized by them to go out and love and serve God.