



From the Pastor's Desk:

Parish Finances: Continuing to look at the Parish's financial status, I am sure that you have been following the "Graph" showing the Weekly Offertory – OLPH Sunday Collections. Week after week you have seen the first "Breakeven Operational Expense" BAR hovering around \$22,000 Dollars while the Sunday Collection BAR hovers around \$18,000 Dollars. The comparison BAR for 2009 is more or less the same. While there is certainly a national economic factor here, these 3 figures go back more than 5 years. The parish has been supporting itself with generosity of parishioners who allowed us to "put money in the bank for a rainy day" and the rain has continued to fall as the cost of operations rise and the overall financial support level remains the same. As I mentioned last week the 1/3 of our Sunday Mass attendees who support our parish keep supporting while the others (except for those who truly cannot) make it impossible to meet the rising costs of daily operations. We have cut down the number of our paid personnel significantly by 16 individuals. [However, remember the Volunteer Separation Package benefits will still be a "Payable" until December 2010.]

Until we come to a balance and see an increase in Sunday Collections that will allow us to "Pay our Bills" I must cut back on "LUXURIES". So, with the summer upon us, THE AIR CONDITIONING WILL ONLY BE USED WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY DUE TO INSIDE HEAT/HUMIDITY FACTORS. WE WILL OPEN ALL THE WINDOWS AND DOORS THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH AND SACRISTIES FOR VENTILATION AND WILL ONLY USE THE AC/FANS TO MOVE SOME AIR AROUND. I do not have any other choice and you all know it... we cannot have or use what we cannot afford to pay for on a daily basis.

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"Reflection on Hope and New Life after the Easter Feasts" (...continued from last week... PART 4)

By Thomas Rosica, CSB (Consulter to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications)

Jesus and Peter

The moving Gospel story of Jesus and Peter is set against this incredibly beautiful backdrop of the sea. Chapter 21 is really an epilogue to the Fourth Gospel. This post-Resurrection "breakfast symphony in two movements" has always been one of my favorite Bible stories. The first movement [vv. 1-14] describes the appearance of the Risen Jesus to his disciples "by the Sea of Tiberias". It is concerned with fish and fishing. The second movement [vv. 15-23] presents a poignant dialogue between Jesus and Peter. It is concerned with sheep and shepherding. Peter certainly knew failure along the road of discipleship. The disciple who was called "rock" wept with regret in Luke 22:62 after denying his Lord. At the sea he is given an opportunity to repent and recommit himself to Jesus.

The story begins calmly, even with a hint of bleakness. When Peter decides to go fishing, there is a certain feeling of resignation about it, alluding to the depression and discouragement he and the other disciples must have experienced after Jesus' death. Peter is simply taking up his old profession. The whole appearance of Jesus is shrouded in mystery, in the familiar atmosphere of "not knowing who he was" that we see so often from the Gospel writers.

In the second movement, we have one of the most personal and moving commissioning stories in the Bible. "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? Do you love me? Are you my friend?" [John 21:15]. These thrice-repeated words of Jesus, preceded as they were by the repetition of the name, "Simon, son of John", form the pastoral mandate: "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep". Peter's threefold denial of Jesus during the trial and crucifixion is now canceled out by the three-fold declaration of love. Yet the thought lingers in our minds, and certainly in Peter's: Why does Jesus ask Peter, on whom he is going to confer the pastoral office as chief shepherd, this question and not others? There are many other questions which we can imagine his having asked him concerning his suitability for ministry. For example, "Simon, son of John, are you aware of the responsibilities that you are undertaking? Are you aware of how many people about you are in need of help: the poor, the hungry, the sick, the needy, and the lonely? Where will you find bread enough to give them something to eat?"

But Jesus sums them all up in a single, basic question, repeated with two different verbs in Greek to indicate the different nuances of love and friendship which are being referred to: "Simon, son of John, do you love me? Are you really my friend?". This question appears to be the central, indeed the only one, because it goes directly to a person's heart.

Each time Peter declares his love, it is followed by a command from the Lord to do what true love compels us to do: "Feed my sheep". Peter's distress is understandable. It is not easy to have one's declaration of love challenged. But every Christian knows that genuine love is put to the test over and over again. That love has developed, for Peter no longer boasts about his loyalty but rather allows the Risen Lord to look into his own heart: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" [John 21:17]. Jesus not only forgave his sin but conferred upon him ultimate responsibility for the flock. For Peter, insight into Jesus' true identity and his compassion brought new demands and responsibilities.

Peter is truly a model for us, as he must always remember his own failures as he undertakes leadership within the church. Rather than incapacitating him, his remembrance enables him to be a merciful and compassionate leader.

How do we deal with memories of our own failures as we reach out to others? Into what kind of intimacy is God calling us at this moment in our life? With whom is God calling us to be intimate? What do we understand to be our responsibilities following upon our own declaration of faith in Jesus? What demands and responsibilities does that place upon our school community? Peter learned his lesson well; he would imitate Jesus the rest of his life even to the point of giving that life as a martyr, dying upside down on a cross on the Vatican hill. Are we prepared to go to that extreme for our faith in Jesus? (...To be continued next week.)

May God +bless you and yours now and forever. *And, to all Mothers and Mother's to be, "HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY".*

Father Anthony