

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given February 6, 2011
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Liturgical Year A

I know many of our parishioners are skiers. I learned to ski the hard way. I went with my family, and my uncle told me, "Oh, no problem...Gravity does it all!" But I learned that skiing requires more than that! And I got it when the ski patrol "arrested" me for being a hazard to others and gave me a free day of lessons.

I had to let go of the mistaken idea that gravity does it all – and it was a painful experience that made all difference.

St. Paul had a painful experience that made all the difference in his life. Having spent time persecuting Christians, he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus. He fell to the ground – which must have been painful, saw a light from heaven, and heard the words from Christ, "Why are you persecuting me?". This probably happened somewhere around 35-40 A.D. Twenty years later, Paul is in the prime of his ministry, writing to the Corinthians, which we hear in the Second Reading today. He's reminding them of the Gospel that he preached when he was there in person. He writes about having demonstrable faith – how he was living the good news, experiencing new life in Christ, practicing the Resurrection.

Paul's painful experience made him into what Jesus is talking about in the Gospel today – into salt of the earth and light for the world – salt and light to others.

Paul's example to the Corinthians was not one of persuasive words but of deeds. As we hear in the First Reading from the prophet Isaiah, Paul acted so that there would be no malicious speech, no oppression, no hunger.

We are each invited to practice the Resurrection. This weekend, there are Valentines up at the doors of the church, inviting us to provide outreach and support for those who are imprisoned. As we gather for the Eucharist today, let's let our hearts be filled with Christ's new life. Then, our charitable deeds can become the Resurrection alive in the world, touching the afflicted with the new life of Christ.