



May 7, 2023

Fifth Sunday of Easter

*You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people
his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him...*

1 Peter 2:19



Dear Friends,

This past week I attended the funeral for my aunt, Marge Schmit. She was married to my Uncle Bob and the mother of five children. Growing up, our family with ten children, and my Uncle Larry and Aunt Betty and their four children often got together for family celebrations often at the parish hall of my uncle the priest, Fr Jerome. My grandparents, and the youngest of their ten boys, uncles Dave and Mike, were there. Then when one of the other uncles and their families were in town the crowd would grow.

My mother and my Aunt Marge were like sisters rather than sisters-in-laws. Both were always ready to welcome more guests to the table. They both could cook for an army. I feel really blessed to have grown up in such a large family helped prepare me for life and ministry as a priest.

Today's readings remind us that it is the People of God who are at the heart of God's mission of reconciling and healing all of creation. In the Western world we are so accustomed to living and acting autonomously that we cannot see the negative effects of individualism and the benefits of family and community. The Surgeon General this week declared we have an epidemic of loneliness. The negative effect of loneliness can be equal to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

The remedy for loneliness is the remedy that God proposes to heal the world. Our calling in Christ is to the gathering that is the expression of Christ's risen body in a particular place. Christians as the people of God become a sign for what God intends for creation and the whole human race. We are not privileged over the rest of humanity or creation. We are image-bearers of God. And God loves us all. First Peter tells us that we are a people called together by God to proclaim together the goodness of God.

In our Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus assures us that there is plenty of room for everyone "in his Father's house." The image Jesus uses comes from his culture. Sons, along with their wives and children, stayed in the same family compound as the patriarch. Through our relationship with Jesus, we become family. And family is always ready to include more. Jesus tells us that he is the authentic (truth) vision (way) of existence (life). His words and actions speak of the love and mercy of God. He is the model of how humans should live. If one lives like Jesus, they will encounter God who is all-merciful Love.

How does love look in practice? In our first reading, as the Church expanded different cultures met each other. And there were some obstacles that had to be overcome. The first challenge was language. The apostles spoke Aramaic, and many of the new members of the community spoke Greek. Rather than ignore the challenge, the community selected seven Greek speakers to help in the ministry to the vulnerable members of the community. That is what love does.

Today as our multi-cultural parish celebrates Cinco die Mayo. We celebrate the gifts of all, and our hope is to be a sign that we can have unity within the rich diversity of creation and model the peace of the world to come. Christ is risen!

Fr Ron

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