

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER - B - 2006

*“You are witnesses ...”*

Two men were discussing their experiences of marriage. The younger man asked, *“How do you and your wife make decisions?”* The older man answered, *“That’s easy. My wife makes all the little decisions while I make all the big ones.”* Obviously very interested, the younger husband asks, *“Can you give me some examples?”* *“Sure. My wife decides things like the neighborhood where we will live, the house we will buy, what the landscaping of the yard will look like, where the children go to school, what kind of car to buy and its color, our budget. Stuff like that.”* Wide eyed, the younger man asks, *“And what are the big things you concern yourself with?”* Somewhat proud of himself, the older man says, *“I solve problems like how to end the war in Iraq, global warming and the energy crisis.”*

Now, this is just a joke, a distortion of reality, but it’s just true enough to make us laugh. When I reflected on it, I began to wonder about what kind of things I concern myself with. How practical are they? And I come off sounding even more delusional than the older husband. I deal with issues like saving everyone’s soul; like getting everyone to love one another, stuff like that.

Then I asked myself where all this fits into the real lives of people and how they live each day. Because the bottom line is how people live with each other each day. If the big things we deal with don’t make any difference in our lives, what’s the point? But if we don’t have people addressing the big questions about world peace, justice for the oppressed, human rights and responsibilities, mutual love, it will only be a matter of time and “chaos” will describe our lives, and those little decisions won’t make much difference, either. And there are many places in our world where chaos reigns.

There is more to the Easter Season than the resurrection of Jesus. As Jesus stands before his frightened disciples, he offers them peace and then, by giving them the Holy Spirit, he empowers them to witness to it. If those who experienced the risen Lord were not sent to witness to others, the resurrection would be something done just for Jesus and the enjoyment of his immediate followers. But Jesus didn't come for his own glory or just for the apostles and the few women who saw him. Jesus was a man for others. He came to bring hope to all of humanity, to let all know the good news that life is stronger than death, that self-giving love is the key to living a full and satisfying life; that all people deserve to live their dignity as human beings made in the image of God.

But there is more. In giving us his Spirit, Jesus formed a new community. We call it church. And this community was formed from the first disciples who had abandoned Jesus and were dragged back from their lack of fidelity, their fear, their estrangement. By his forgiveness, Jesus reconstitutes them into a new community enlivened by the Holy Spirit. So the resurrection is more than a victory of life over death, or good over evil, it is, as one theologian puts it, "*a victory of companionship over abandonment and community over estrangement.*" (Roberto Coizueta, Boston College)

As he was when he was with his disciples, Jesus is today with those who matter to him. The question is, who matters the most to Jesus? As every parent or teacher or counselor knows, at any given time, it is the sick child, the confused student, the troubled friend, the poor and excluded who matter the most because their lives are most at risk. Those who matter the most to Jesus are those most in need right now. They are the ones who most need to hear the good news and see evidence of the risen Lord.

With this background, we turn to the Annual Catholic Appeal. We are being asked to put our gifts at the service of others, and in this we can help

those at risk of our archdiocese. The Annual Catholic Appeal is about being catholic. We belong to larger church than our parish. There are some needs out there that we cannot meet as individual parishes. We must work together to accomplish what we cannot do alone. We must unite our efforts to meet them. It is one effective way of witnessing to the Spirit of the risen Jesus in our midst to people at risk.

The Annual Catholic Appeal recognizes the need of training new priests, offering social services to the poor and needy, of helping to sustain Catholic schools and supporting retired priests and religious sisters. Please notice the posters on the Annual Catholic Appeal in the main narthex. Notice how hands tell stories. They may be caressing a child or comforting an old nun, folded in prayer or united as one. There are some very important hands not pictured, and those are yours and mine, offering the assistance we can to help the 63 important ministries of the archdiocese.

The publicity focuses primarily on the need for seminarians and the cost of their training. They are important because priests are needed for the sake of the Eucharist. But the Eucharist is needed for the sake of the Church. And the Church is needed for the sake of witnessing to the good news to the hungry, poor, disillusioned, broken, abandoned and forgotten. We, like Christ, exist for others. These are the ones most at risk in our communities, and we must respond to them with love and generosity.

How much is a generous gift? How does a dollar a day sound for one year? That is \$365 to support seminarian formation and the many other ministries of the Church in Western Washington. (It's about the cost of a tank of gas.) Some of you can give more, some can't give that much. And before you say you can't give anything, reconsider. Maybe you can something.

The Church is about a wonderful work; to continue the work of Jesus. And in doing so, we reveal, ultimately, the love of Jesus to the world. I will raise my pledge this year and hope you can do so as well.

### **THE ASK**

1. Take and envelope.
2. Fill out general information.
3. Check scale to determine your pledge amount.
4. Fill in your pledge amount.
5. State how you intend to pay your pledge.
  - Over 10 months
  - Electronic funds transfer
  - Credit card
  - Check
6. Please, FILL OUT A CARD, even if you cannot make a pledge! Just write “None” on the envelope and return it. This means we will not have to send you a follow-up letter.
7. Whoever makes the big decisions in your house, please fill out the card now. I’m going to keep asking for four weeks until you do. Fill out a card ... Fill out a card ... Fill out a card, please.