

May 1, 2022  
Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41  
Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6,11-12,13  
Revelation 5:11-14  
John 21:1-19

This morning's Scripture readings continue to unfold the immediate post resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples, and how His Presence literally transformed their lives. From a conclave of disheveled and distraught men who had nearly lost hope for a Messiah, to a close-knit band of itinerant preachers willing to share their newfound faith in God, their transformations serve as a testimony of how an encounter with the risen Christ can change the life of any man or woman, boy or girl.

Taken from the Book of Acts our first reading serves to illustrate the tenacity of a unique group of people who could not help but share their newfound faith with others. The disciples were not in the habit of debating or studying the topic of evangelism; they were just doing it naturally. Ordered not to teach in the name of Jesus, the local Jewish religious leaders were now trying to stop the apostles from talking about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

So here we have an important key concerning sharing one's faith – and that is - sharing your faith may cause some people to be uncomfortable, especially when the message begins to hit home.

We read that Peter countered their demand for silence with a defiant verbal salvo, "We must obey God rather than men." He then went on to say, "You had him killed by hanging him on a tree,

but the God of our ancestors raised him up, and we are witnesses of these things.”

Here we discover another very important key regarding sharing one’s faith. Sharing your faith may indeed cost you something, and sometimes it may cost you everything. History records that many of the apostles died as martyrs. However, most of us will not be asked to make that kind of sacrifice. Probably the most we will ever suffer is a bruised ego when someone rejects what we have to say.

However, and here we will get right into the meat of the homily, there may be a reason why some people might reject our testimony. So, with that thought in mind, here is one suggestion as to why some may reject what we have to say.

The apostles died as martyrs for *sharing what* they had witnessed, not for *being* a witness to what they shared? Think about it for a moment, the apostles died for *sharing what* they had witnessed, not for *being* a witness to what they shared?

I know this statement may be somewhat confusing, but it is very important, and a key explanation why what we share may fall on deaf ears and fail to influence other people.

In other words, the disciples did not die because they saw or heard about the risen Lord. No not at all. They died because they *shared with others* that they had seen the risen Lord.

By definition, a witness is a person who has seen, and therefore he or she is able to attest to the truth because he or she can give first hand evidence to what they experienced. Subsequently we must

remember that a bona fide witness cannot tell another person's story.

How so you may ask? Well think about it; when telling another person's story, the story is technically considered to be second hand information, and second hand information is not admissible in a court of law – why, because of the lack of an authentic eyewitness. Even if the account were deemed reasonable to believe, no juror or judge can technically guarantee it as being true.

I hope you can see where we are going here. Please allow me to explain further in the context of sharing one's faith. For example, why should someone believe your account or my account about how God helped King David some three thousand years ago? They weren't there, and neither were we.

When we report that God spoke to Moses or helped King David, or God blessed him or her in a certain way, and therefore we suggest that surely, He will help them too, they have every right to say – prove it. And you know what, we can't.

Even if other biblical characters and their stories support our perspective, to others the Bible stories remain secondhand information and therefore qualified only by faith.

So then in this case all you or I can do is express *our* faith and hope in God's faithfulness to those people mentioned in the Bible, and then pray that they will follow suit.

However, on the other hand, if you or I share what God did personally for us, well then – now that's a testimony supported

with firsthand information. See what I mean. Firsthand experience and information make all the difference in the world. Who can argue with what you personally experienced – no one.

Therefore, the apostles could not help but share what they saw, and heard, and touched with their hands. However, I sense many today struggle with a lack of any real conviction concerning telling others what they have seen or experienced. It's almost as if they are embarrassed concerning what God has done in their lives.

Subsequently, the desire to share one's faith in Christ must come from a sure conviction deep within, and not just because one has been told that he or she ought to do it. Hence the reason so many people who regularly attend AA are so effective in sharing their life recovery stories is because they have personally been there and done that, and now they can personally witness to the fact that the program does work if one follows the suggested simple steps.

So, what exactly does it mean to share one's faith?

Many Christian folk have come to believe that the best way to share one's faith is to quote Scripture to people. In other words, they assume that in order to believe in Christ people need to be confronted with "evidence that demands a verdict."

But can you see the problem with their reasoning? To a skeptic or non-believer, they are just re-telling secondhand information, not that it isn't most certainly true, because it is, nevertheless to the unbeliever it is still second hand, and therefore it is often rejected by both the skeptic and world's court alike.

So what is the corrective answer? St. Peter clearly admonishes us, “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15).

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” What a novel concept, share with other people what God has personally done for you, or maybe even better - live your life in a way that others will ask you what is it that makes you different from all the rest.

Not knowing what to do without Jesus being right there with them Peter, along with some of the other disciples decided to go fishing. They fished until early dawn and caught nothing. Meanwhile from the shore they heard what could have been mistaken for as a chiding voice, “Children, have you caught anything to eat.”

Children? We can only imagine the reaction of good ole fiery Peter, what do you mean children – who do you think you are? – “Hey cast the net over on the other side and you will catch something.” But what did he have to lose, and to their surprise they had more fish than they could pull in.?

Finally, it was John the beloved who caught on and said to Peter, “Hey, lighten up it’s the Lord.” Meanwhile and rather embarrassed, Peter jumped into the water and swam the hundred yards or so back to shore. There he saw a charcoal fire, roasting fish and some bread. Jesus motioned breakfast is ready, “Bring some of the fish you just caught and we will eat together.”

One hundred fifty-three large fish, and the net never tore. I can only imagine what Peter may have been wondering. How was it that he didn’t see the flames, or smell the wood smoke or discern

the charbroiled fish? Where did Jesus come from, and where did he get the coals, the fish, and the bread without him knowing about it?

Jesus took the bread and gave it to them and in like manner He gave them some fish. This meeting was the third time He appeared to them, and still yet they dared not ask him who he was, even though they realized He was the Lord.

Subsequently the gospel reading illustrates exactly how we are to share our faith. Look for the need. Look for the need. Jesus chose to share His faith at the very point of the disciples' need. What do you mean Jesus chose to share his faith? Remember, Jesus said and/or did nothing but what he first saw and/or heard from the Father. The fact is, Jesus had faith in His Father and the disciples also had need to know the Father.

The disciples had fished all night, it was dawn, and they were hungry, tired and had no fish. However, for Peter the lack of fish was not the real problem, neither was the fact they had no food. Reading further, we see that Peter had an unmet need. He needed to forgive himself for failing the Lord and for failing himself. He had cursed and abandoned his earthly friend and heavenly Master.

He must have felt absolutely miserable. How much worse could he have done or said? Somehow, he had to have some resolve, and the resolution was that he needed to know and feel forgiven.

We mentioned earlier that this was Jesus' third visit. In the first two meetings the topic concerning his need of forgiveness was never broached other than to forgive those who have sinned. However, Peter needed to clear the air before he could go on to

witness to others; he needed assurance that he was forgiven; and he needed a personal word of encouragement from the Lord.

Think about it, if you were him would you trust your most precious sheep or children to a three-time failure like Peter? Sometimes all we need is for someone to really and truly believe in us – personally speak a word of encouragement and hope, and then not give up on us.

To that end, Jesus rose to the occasion and shared His faith in the Father by believing that Peter could become a transformed man. If you recall His garden prayer, He prayed that His Father would protect those who were given to Him.

Notice here that Jesus did not give Peter a verse or two from the Psalms; He didn't quote the *Torah* from memory by citing verbatim all the Laws of Moses Peter had broke, nor did He try to interpret any end-time visions from the Prophet Isaiah to scare Peter into being ready for the rapture or the tribulation. No, none of the above are evident.

Jesus zeroed right down onto the need, and He started the process of restoration. What He did do was to fix him breakfast. After they shared some good food and a little conversation, and having gained Peter's attention and confidence, He dug a little deeper into the real problem by asking some pointed questions. "Peter, do you love me?" True enough, Jesus already knew the answers, yet they were questions Peter was wrestling with and questions only he and Jesus could deal with.

Jesus knew exactly what Peter needed to discover; he needed to discover the assurance of God's love and forgiveness. He needed

to be directed as to what his true potential and priorities could be. Finally, he needed to be valued and affirmed with meaning and purpose in life. He needed to be reassured by someone who was flesh and blood and filled with the Holy Spirit and not a Scripture verse. St. Paul said, "You are our living epistles written in our hearts and read by all men," (2 Cor. 3:2-3).

Only after all these basic needs were satisfactorily met, did Jesus say to him, "Follow Me and feed my sheep." And do you know what; Peter did exactly that - he followed Him faithfully until his own martyred death where he was reportedly crucified upside down?

So, then the question remains, what is faith in Christ? It's pretty simple. Faith is living life in and with Christ. If you want to share your faith with someone; then, share your life in Christ with them.

God the Father wanted to share His faith, so He shared His only begotten Son's life with us. Jesus modeled the same plan with His disciples when He shared His life with them, and if you carefully look, you will see both the disciples and the history of the Church doing the same for us.

Now it's your turn and my turn to share our faith filled lives with others. It is true, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." But it is also true that the Word of God became flesh to demonstrate God's love. This argument has been historically made by firsthand witnesses, and the plan and methodologies are well documented by countless other witnesses. The fulfillment of the Great Commission is our reasonable service.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.