



from
Jacob's Well

Dear Parishioners,

In today's Gospel we hear the first words of Jesus within his public ministry. In a way we could say that these provide us with the core of Jesus' message: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Throughout the Gospels Jesus frequently preached about the Kingdom of God, often in parables and often through his actions of healing and reconciliation. In his preaching about God's kingdom we are challenged to recognize and believe that the Kingdom of God is already here in our midst. This belief, of course, requires something of us - namely to turn back to God and to live lives that are worthy of the Kingdom. Our lives must become pleasing in the sight of God. Jesus then begins to call four fishermen to join him in his mission of healing and reconciliation. From the beginning Jesus made very clear that building and preaching this Kingdom was not something that He was going to accomplish alone. Jesus' message and mission continue into our own time in history leading us to discern an answer to: "How is Jesus calling us to collaborate or partner with him in this continuing work of building and preaching God's kingdom of love, justice and peace in our time?"

I find the words of St. Paul in our second reading today extremely relevant for our time as Paul acknowledges the divisions that threatened to splinter or divide their community. Paul then points to the source of their unity- Christ - "that there be no divisions among you but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose." I think it can be very easy, especially for Catholics, to remain focused on the personal aspects of our faith and forget that there is a much larger context. Both St. Paul and Jesus remind us that we are not saved by ourselves; we are saved in community, as the Body of Christ called to be in communion.

This weekend, in collaboration with the parish leadership, we are unveiling our newly-created Mission and Vision Statements for St. Mary. Our Mission Statement, along with our core values, is a way of naming the purpose of our parish, while the Vision speaks more to what we hope to accomplish in the future. As leaders of St. Mary we have embarked on this strategic work to prepare us to be effective on the path of renewal that Renew My Church will invite us to take more seriously.

The ultimate purpose of the Church is our salvation in Jesus Christ. As leaders and ministers in the Church we must constantly seek to extend communion by inviting those we meet into a deeper personal relationship with Jesus as we experience him in the Sacraments, in His Word and in our community as we gather together each week.

Our Holy Father has declared that the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time be devoted to the celebration of the study of the word of God. St. Jerome devoted his life to making the scriptures more accessible and believed that "Ignorance of Scripture is also ignorance of Christ." In other words, we cannot hope to develop a personal relationship with Christ without hearing and studying the holy Gospels.

Finally, today is also the beginning of Catholic Schools Week which is celebrated each year to raise up the value of Catholic education in our time. I am grateful for the commitment and generosity of those who support Frassati Catholic Academy. While we have had to make some difficult decisions to make our operation more cost effective, Frassati Catholic Academy remains a vital ministry serving our local church. Thanks for all who continue to support Catholic education and for our dedicated teachers and staff.

Let us pray for one another,

Fr. Jerry