

Ascension (Sunday)
Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski
June 2, 2019

We are in the midst of Ordination season:

- Our diocese, just last week, ordained 4 seminarians to the priesthood.
- A few weeks ago, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of Fr. Paul's ordination.
- Today at 11am Mass, we commemorate(d) the 50th anniversary of Msgr. Gregory's ordination.
- This coming week is the 27th anniversary of Fr. Ken's ordination.
- While, last week was the 13th anniversary of Deacon Steve's ordination to the permanent diaconate.

Well..none of these gentlemen have anything on me. For you see, this coming week is the 5th anniversary of my diaconate ordination! However, I must admit that I am the junior member of the ordained here at the Cathedral.

During ordination, the bishop invoked the Holy Spirit to come down upon the ordained and enabled them to minister in Christ's name and that of the Church.

But all of us, lay and ordained alike, have received the power of the Holy Spirit through our baptism and confirmation, when, as St. Paul mentions in today's reading to the Ephesians, we received the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of [Christ]." So, as we heard in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we all are called by Jesus to "be [his] witnesses...to the ends of the earth." That witness begins with the kerygma, the proclamation of the salvific gospel message (that Christ suffered, died, was resurrected and ascended

into heaven for our salvation), as we proclaim every Sunday in the Creed and as we just heard in today's Gospel according to Luke:

"That the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations..."

Our witness of the gospel message continues through our words and deeds. I believe that Jesus' teaching between his Resurrection and Ascension, which we have heard over the last 6 weeks, gives us a roadmap of what our actions need to be in order to be Christ's witnesses to the world:

- We need to "Love one another"— The new commandment that Jesus gave us. As Jesus said, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)
- We must show mercy and forgiveness – By way of example, when, on the shores of the Sea of Tiberius, Jesus forgave Peter for his denial. (Jn 21:1-19)

Love, mercy and forgiveness!

I conclude with a parable of a man who went to church one Sunday. He forgot to silence his phone and it rang during Mass. The pastor scolded him. His fellow parishioners admonished him after Mass. His wife harangued him on his carelessness all the way home. One could see the shame, embarrassment and humiliation on his face. After all this, he never stepped foot in the church again.

BUT

That evening, he went to a bar. He was still nervous and trembling. He accidentally spilled his drink on the table. The waiter apologized and gave him a napkin to clean himself. The janitor mopped the floor. The female manager offered him a complimentary drink. She also gave him a huge hug saying, "Don't worry, man. Who doesn't make mistakes?" He has not stopped going to that bar since then.

Think about your life and how you're living that life between now and when Christ returns in glory. Now place yourself in the scene of that parable: Would you show that man love, mercy and forgiveness and invite him back to Mass **or** would you drive him to drink?