

SCREEN: Happy Easter! screen

We had an amazing Easter at St. Pius
with big crowds and hundreds of visitors & guests.
There was energy and enthusiasm and tons of smiles.
And I want to thank you for welcoming
those who worshipped with us.
Now while our Easter Masses were going on,
my mom was dealing with a health crisis.
It began on Good Friday when she got sick
from something she ate...or so we thought.
On Holy Saturday she felt a little better,
but woke up on Easter unable to get out of bed.
So we called an ambulance which took her
to the emergency room.
In between Easter Masses my sisters and I
were texting back and forth with the latest updates.
After Masses ended I made my way
to Montgomery General Hospital.
Thankfully I can report that my mom is home and on the mend.
But it was a little scary.
And made for a very different holiday than anyone expected.
Easter dinner plans were scrapped and
replaced with visits to my mom's bedside.
It got everyone's attention in a hurry.
We had to focus on what matters most.
And it wasn't how or where we'd celebrate Easter,
but being there for our each other and finding strength in our faith.
In other words, the basics....the essentials of life.

SCREEN: blank red background

Raise your hand if you've faced a family emergency.

Sooner or later, every family does.

A crisis can come out of nowhere and change everything in an instant.

It can be scary.

And while no one ever wishes for a crisis,

it can get your attention and help you realize what matters most.

For disciples, a crisis is a 'spiritual wake up call';

something God can use to grow our faith and

call us back to the basics.

SCREEN: Faith 101 main screen

Today we're beginning a new message series titled, Faith 101.

We chose this title because the readings for the Easter season

call us back to the basics of our faith.

They provide a road map for how to follow Christ.

Which is helpful no matter where you are on your spiritual journey.

If you're just setting out on the road of discipleship,

it can be overwhelming figuring out what to know and do.

And if you've been a churchgoer for years,

it's helpful to be reminded of the basics from time to time.

So each week we will focus on a lesson Christ taught his followers.

SCREEN: we must be the healing hands of Jesus

And today's lesson is this:

we must be the healing hands of Jesus.

Let's begin.

So, as I said, the readings from now until

Pentecost will tell the story of how our Church began.

But don't think of this as a history lesson because

it's our story too.

And what a story it is with ups and downs, joys and pains,

crises and successes.

The Apostles spent three years learning from Jesus.

You'd think that would have made them all straight A students, but it didn't.

Sometimes they failed and failed miserably;

but they never gave up.

They kept learning and eventually they got it.

We saw this in our first reading today

from the Acts of the Apostles.

Just like the title of the book tells us, it describes the actions of Jesus' disciples after he rose from the dead on Easter.

Today we heard that many signs and wonders were done at the hands of the apostles and that a great number of people were joining the church.

We also heard this:

SCREEN: People carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them.

Now, don't let the importance of what I just read get lost on you.

Let me read it again and I will emphasize one phrase.

*People carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats **so that when Peter came by,** at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them.*

That's right, Peter...not Jesus but Peter!

The same guy who was scared of his own shadow on the night of Jesus's arrest now had the crowds chasing his shadow!

How ironic is that?

On Holy Thursday Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus.

He was in so much pain from what he did that he ran and hid.

Peter was nowhere to be found when his best friend was crucified.

How is it possible that the same person who did that was now filled with faith....faith so great that others are being healed by him?

The answer is that the Risen Christ forgave and healed Peter.

He took away his pain and gave him the power to heal others.

This is a lesson on what God wants all disciples to do.

And it also says that Peter got an “A plus” in Faith 101.

He learned from the master that followers of Jesus

must do as Jesus did,

they must be the hands of Christ and heal others.

SCREEN: blank red background

And if Peter could be healed

and receive the power to heal others,

the same is true for us.

Now, your first reaction when you hear me say that is probably to think, *“I don’t have the power to heal others!”*

Well, think again.

When I was at the hospital on Easter Sunday,

I wanted more than anything to heal my mom

so she could get out of the hospital.

But I’m no doctor....I couldn’t heal her body.

What I could do was help her heal emotionally and spiritually.

I brought her Holy Communion, I anointed her,

and prayed with her.

My sisters and I talked and joked with her.

We gave my mom the gift of our presence and it brought her incredible comfort....real emotional and spiritual healing.

So have no doubt that God can use us to heal others.

Miraculous, physical healings like those described in the Acts of the Apostles might be the exception,

but spiritual healings happen all time.

And it's how God wants to use us.

Every person here knows someone who is suffering either physically, emotionally or spiritually.

You can begin by praying for the person.

Prayer is the best place to start and to return to every day.

It helps the one who needs healing and it helps you.

Because when you pray for someone, they're on your mind and in your heart.

Then you'll be more receptive to God's next step which might include calling or visiting or lending a helping hand to the person or their family.

These may not sound like big deals, but to the one who is hurting they can truly be life saving remedies. It's how you can be the healing hand of Christ.

Last Sunday when I was driving to the hospital I asked God, *Lord, why today? We had amazing Easter Masses, I was flying high.*

What are you trying to tell me....what's the lesson, God?

Driving home I got the answer.

I don't think the lesson was really for me or my mom.

I think it's for you.

Someone in church right now needs to hear this message because of someone in your life who needs your healing touch.

Maybe God allowed my mom to suffer precisely because he wanted me to share this message with you.

And if you hear this message and become

the healing hands for someone else,
my mom would be the first to say it was worth the pain.

SCREEN: Faith 101 main screen.

We've prepared a takeaway for this series (hold up).

Be sure to get one of these on your way out of church.

For each of the four weeks there is a
question and an answer and a task for you to complete
during the week.

Think of the tasks as your Faith 101 homework assignments.

Here's your task for week one:

every day this week, offer a brief prayer for
someone you know who needs healing.

Just a short prayer which can be as simple as:

"Lord, please heal my mom...my sister, my friend, my co-worker."

Do it each day this week.

And as you pray, know that God wants to use you
to be Christ's hands of healing for someone in your life.

And just two final things as I conclude this message.

For many years a group of parishioners have been meeting regularly as our Prayer Shawl
ministry.

They crochet shawls which are presented as gifts to
the sick and homebound and they also pray for the sick.

They gave me a shawl for my dad when he was sick
and it gave my parents great comfort knowing
that others were praying for them.

A representative of the ministry will be at the table in the entranceway after Mass.

Please stop by and learn more about their ministry
and view their handiwork.

At this time I'm going to offer the sacrament of

the Anointing of the Sick.

The Sacrament is for anyone with a chronic condition,
anyone preparing for surgery, anyone in recovery,
or anyone who feels spiritually oppressed
or emotionally distressed.

There is a prayer which the priest offers at the time of anointing.

SCREEN: *Prayer for the Anointing of the Sick*

**Through this holy anointing, may God in his love and mercy,
help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.**

May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up. Amen.

I will say it outloud now so everyone can hear it,

then I will make the sign of the cross on

the forehead and the backs of the hands of those I anoint.

Let us pray:

Through this holy anointing, may God in his love and mercy,

help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up. Amen.

I'll first anoint those in the reserved pews,

if you are seated elsewhere, please make your way over.