

[Readings: Acts 14:21-27; Psalm 145; Rev. 21:1-5a; John 13:31-33a, 34-35]

We have many funerals here at St. Martin de Porres. And as part of our celebration of the life of the deceased and the renewal of our own faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we invite the family of the deceased to select the readings and funeral music for the day of the Mass of the Resurrection.

Ironically, many of the readings that we hear during these Easter Sundays are readings that appear in the Funeral Mass book of readings. Today, two of the three readings are such readings. But they apply not to a dead person but to a community facing change. They apply not to a loved one who is about to be buried, but to a church community that is about to be risen from the dead. Listen.

From today's First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles: "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God." In order for us to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and with the Church He founded, we need to change -- we need to encounter Jesus Christ, we need to grow in His Holy Spirit, and we need to witness our faith to others.

This weekend, Paul and Barnabas are still together, which means we are en route on Paul's first of three missionary journeys. They will break up over a difference of opinion concerning fellow missionary John Mark (who gave us the Gospel of Mark) before long, but at the moment they are full of wonder at the great things God is doing everywhere they go. It is sad and a little unnerving to think of Paul and Barnabas separating.

Barnabas sponsored Paul into the Christian community when no one else was willing to touch his conversion with a 10-foot pole. As missionaries, they have proclaimed the Gospel, suffered hardships, prayed, and celebrated Mass together. Why they finally split up over a personnel issue is hard to fathom. But it does remind us that the Church has roots, both human and divine, from its inception. Disciples on their mission don't always get along with each other! I think of that as we begin Families of Parishes. We can agree to disagree! As long as we do it in charity and cooperation.

At the end of the first journey, the missionaries have good news to report. When you read the circumstances of their journey, you are surprised that their report is made with such unqualified enthusiasm.

Clearly, the response of the Gentiles to the story of salvation is so exciting to them that the rest – disputes and divisions -- pales in comparison.

Are we stuck in a rut in our individual lives, or within this generation, or marooned at this point of human history? It can feel that way at times, but only because time and the danger and the fear of the adventure of change is blocking our perspective. The command to love is the call to be made new, and it is the one force with the power to move even mountains when necessary. If we love one another, and do not settle for less, then we will discover what the first apostles knew along their journey: the endless delight of what God can do and how all the old barriers to love dissolve as we become open to the possibility.

For decades, I always thought that the hardest thing for me to do in life is change. To change my way of thinking. To change my way of living. To change my way of relating to others. But do you know what we hate more than change? You and I hate the time and energy needed during the transition!

We have to move into a new house. I don't mind that we are going to be living in a new house. It's the sorting, the packing, the recycling, and the travel back and forth several times that I hate. You, too? I have been transferred to a new job, or I am recently retired. I don't mind the new job, I am grateful to be able to afford to retire. But I hate the transition of having to learn a new routine, having to learn and remember a whole slew of new names, and, if I am retired now, having to see and to be with my spouse 24/7! You too?

Yet if, with the grace of God, we are successful in the transition, then the spirit of today's Second Reading from the Book of Revelation takes root. We will see a new heaven and a new earth. The old life is gone and a new life is embraced. Tears are wiped away. God is with us forever, making all things new!

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus says to His followers, "Come and see, come follow me." As He leaves this earth for eternity, He says, "Go and make disciples." Today, He says, "Love one another."

That is the essential job description of the authentic Christian disciple. Follow Me. Love one another. Go and make disciples. Or the summary statement of Unleash the Gospel: Change, Accompany, Grow.

This was the spirit of the Synod that took place in the Archdiocese of Detroit back in 1969, five years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in Rome. The Holy Spirit inspired Church leadership and their advisors to write some of the most

thoughtful, compassionate and inspiring teachings in our history as a Church. The Second Vatican Council breathed new life into the Church; Synod '69 in Detroit put flesh and bones on it.

In 2014, Archbishop Vigneron called us once again to prepare for another synod. This one he called Synod 16, calling every Catholic in every parish to move from a mindset of maintenance to a spirit of mission. To breathe new life into the tired old bones of our parishes. To “Unleash the Gospel” in the Archdiocese of Detroit. And now to continue to complete the mission with Families of Parishes.

Beginning next weekend, in anticipation of our parish 60th anniversary celebration, we will have another opportunity to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and with the Church He founded, to encounter Jesus Christ in and through one another, to grow in His Holy Spirit, and to witness our faith to others and accompany them in their journey of faith. A parish mission brings many graces to a parish community. This year's parish mission will be more traditional. Fr. Jewel Aytona, of the Fathers of Mercy, will preach at all Masses NEXT WEEKEND. Then on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, May 23, 24 and 25, we will have Eucharistic Adoration and Confessions at 6:00 PM, Fr. Aytona's talk at 7:00 PM, and more Confessions at 8:00 PM. His mission talk topics:

Confidence in God & St. Joseph, Patron of the Church; Lukewarmness is the Devil in disguise; The Last Four Things. We stand at a crossroads between past, present, and the future into which we are invited. Jesus gives us a new and challenging commandment that leads us to full citizenship in the new and eternal Jerusalem. To get there, we have to become something new. A new door of faith opens here. Hope you can join us and cross the threshold! ALLELUIA and AMEN!