

Fifth Sunday of Easter: Behold, I Make All Things New

It was extraordinary. No one could have ever expected it to happen. People whom the Jewish people normally referred to as the dogs, the gentiles, were listening to the preaching of Jewish missionaries and were flocking to become members of the New Way, the Way of Jesus Christ. So many people throughout the various lands were becoming Christians that Paul and Barnabas had to establish Christian communities in these foreign lands. They called each of these communities Churches, not just referring to the building but to the people united in the New Way. Extraordinary. The gentiles were receiving the Word of God and responding. This was beyond the comprehension of the ancient Hebrews. They were the Chosen People. How could others also receive God's choice? Who would have thought? When Paul and Barnabas reported all this to the Christian Community of Antioch, they were convinced that God had done this. He had called the gentiles to himself. The world was being transformed. It's all new.

"Behold, I make all things New," the One who sits on the Throne said in the second reading from the *Book of Revelations*. The old order has passed away. There will be a new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem.

This theme of newness is continued in today's Gospel where Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

There is to be a new relationship with God, and a new relationship with each other.

Who do we think that we are that we can just talk to the Almighty Creator of the Universe every day, all day? The young mother with two screaming children and one more getting into some sort of trouble in the house, prays, "Lord, get me through this." The woman or man in business fighting to be honest when he or she is surrounded by so many who cheat on their jobs, on the spouses, prays, "Keep me faithful, Lord." The Teen who is confronted daily with the temptation to give in to what so many others are doing simply to be accepted by the in-crowd says, "Lord, help me to make good choices." Who do we think that we are that we can just talk to God all day and that He will hear us and respond to us? Who do we think we are? We are who He made us to be. We are His Daughters and Sons. Daughters of God, Sons of God, we are sacred, holy to God. He loves us as a Father loves his children. Of course we can talk to Him all day. And just as good parents love it when their children confide in them, God loves us when we confide in Him.

Over 30 years ago when then Bishop John Clement Favalora told me that he needed me to leave the parish I founded, St. Matthew in Largo, and return to my family at St. Ignatius as their pastor, one of the many concerns that I had was that I would not be good enough for the people of Fr. John LaTondress' parish. There were a lot of

holy people up there. Would I be good enough for them? The answer was, "Of course not." At least, not on my own. None of us are ever good enough on our own for the various ways that God calls us to serve Him. I know that there are many Moms and Dads here who wonder if they are good enough to lead their children to God. I know there are many Moms and Dads here who wonder if they are good enough to create a holy home. But God, who has made all things new, also makes us good enough to do His work, or, in the very least, cleans up the mess we make so we can try again. Let me re-iterate: folks, we all feel that we are not good enough. But God makes us good enough. He makes us better than we are, infinitely better than we are. He makes all things new.

There is also a new way of living experienced in the way we Christians treat each other and reach out to those in the world around us. "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The greatest proof of our faith is not a theological or philosophical argument that can be made to defend the faith or some individual dogma, or belief of the faith. The greatest proof of our faith is found in the way we treat each other and the way that we reach out to all others. The vast majority of the people whom I have witnessed coming into the faith, have done so because they want to be part of this Community of Love. The Eucharist is certainly a great draw for them because they want to share this special presence of God with the Catholic community, but the sacramental presence only makes sense to them when they experience the sacrificial love of the Lord in the way that Christians treat each other. Before he gave them the Eucharist, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and then told them to do the same thing. People experience others being kind, loving and good and say, "I want to be part of that." This type of love is not the way of the world. It is the Way of Jesus Christ, the Way of the One who has made all things new.

Our faith is ever ancient and ever new. It began 2,000 years ago when the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, empowered the disciples on Pentecost Sunday to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the whole world. It is renewed every time each of us renews our relationship with God and lives this relationship in the way we treat others.

"See, I make all things new." Thank you, Lord, for making us your Daughters and Sons. Thank you, Lord, for making us sacred, holy. Thank you, Lord, for leading us to make your love real in the world by loving one another. Thank you, Lord, for Easter. Thank you, Lord, for making all things new.