

Homily
May 15, 2022
5th Sunday of Easter
32:19 – 42:37

Many of you, I am sure, have experienced reading stories to small children. Right? Do you have a favorite story? Yes! What is it? Which story book do you really like? What about you? Mother Bruce. That one I haven't heard of. And then after you get that first really wonderful story that you like, you find another one, don't you?

You get a favorite story and then another one comes along. Different characters, maybe a different setting, but still and all, those stories have some basic ideas, truths that we learn from, right? Right! (So helpful. So cooperative. Nice!)

And we who get to read them get to read them over and over and over again. And we try very hard to sort of spice it up, right? We don't actually read it exactly the same way every time. Unless we're told to, which some children will tell you, "No. That's not right. Do it right."

Stories. Favorite stories that have a common theme and teach us.

This morning we have heard three stories. The community of believers is the common thread. The common thread is also known as the communion of believers. Wait a minute. I thought Communion was that which we received, right?

But actually, you see this building here? What do we call it? We call it a church. It gets that name from the Church (gesturing to the congregation), us. And Communion, that we receive, gets the name from the communion of believers.

What have we heard?

First from the Acts of the Apostles we heard of a number of small communions of believers, small communities that Paul and his travel mates visited again and again, to build them up in their belief, in their life together. To comfort them and console them. To urge them to hold onto the belief and to live the life.

The Book of Revelation is written to seven churches – seven different communions of believers in Asia Minor. The book is there to encourage them in a time of persecution. They all had a common belief. They had a common way of life and even though they were spread apart, they formed an area of communion. The author continues to encourage them to hold on, for the goodness of God will triumph.

In the Gospel we see a very small communion of believers, the eleven. As we heard, Judas had left. It's now just the eleven, the eleven who had followed and had walked with Jesus and witnessed his life and will soon witness his death and resurrection. They are, in one sense, the first communion of believers, gathered for a meal. Believing.

Learning how to live. Especially by loving one another. Not just love YOU and love YOU (individually), but love one another (gesturing toward all the congregation).

We are here today because we are a communion of believers. Some of us call Our Lady of Lourdes our parish home and we are a distinct communion of believers. But there are guests here today, right? All the guests raise your hand. Wonderful! You're here because you're a part of the larger communion of believers. And when you come here, wherever you are together, we are one.

I've had the privilege over the years to witness again and again the communion of believers. First Saint Andrew's, my home parish and the parishes that I've served. But more so, I've had the privilege of being able to be in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Savannah and many points in between - to gather together in prayer and Eucharist with the communion of believers.

I've had the privilege of being in South Korea, in Yiodo Square, Yiodo Square with 750,000 – plus believers gathered for the International Eucharistic Congress.

And then on to China - where the small group that we were got to meet the bishop of Xi'an and his priests. A very tiny communion of believers who could – well, they were similar to the folks in the Book of Revelation – holding on, believing and yet under persecution.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, with my friend, Archbishop Albert. Isla Mujeres, off of Cancun', the Island of Syros, part of the Greek Isles. Munich. The actual sharing in Eucharist in the ruins of Corinth in Greece.

I could go on and on. The blessings of being able to encounter again and again, in different places with different people, most of them I didn't know, and many spoke in varied languages. But always the communion of believers gathered for prayer and Eucharist.

We're connected brothers and sisters. And we come here week after week, God willing. Why do we come here? To tell the story again and again. To hear the stories of our faith ancestors. To share in their wisdom and their struggles. Knowing that even though they are part now of the Communion of Saints (oh, there's that word again...) they are still a part of us and we of them. Week after week, story after story – some favorites and some too long. We come to share in Eucharist as that community of believers receiving Communion and then going forth with it, now strengthened to live our belief and our life.

I love being with the communion of believers. I hope you do, too. And I hope you find many reasons to gather with some small part, or some large,

massive celebration. And rejoice in that and tell the story again and again and again