

Pastor's corner – February 27, 2011- called to conversion

The last few Sundays we have heard proclaimed Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus teaches his disciples and us how to live our relationships. His "sermon on the mount" sure puts the mirror of the Gospel squarely before us. There can be no hedging on the life Jesus is calling us to: "you have learned that it was said... but I say to you": "forgive...; reconcile...; love your enemies." Just as Jesus is the concrete proof that God's love is unconditional, so the disciples of Jesus are called to become living examples of God's unconditional love. We are called to live with integrity, fidelity, honesty and strong moral character.

These Gospel passages come at a time when we have been reminded that several persons in our community are journeying with us since last October in the Rite of Christian Initiation. You may remember: a few Sundays ago we celebrated that simple but profound rite in which I and the leader of the RCIA program touched with the sign of the cross the forehead ("by this sign of his love Christ will be your strength. Learn now to know and follow him"), the ears ("may you hear the voice of the Lord"), the eyes ("may you see the glory of God"), the lips ("may you respond to the word of God"), the heart ("may Christ dwell there by faith"), the shoulders ("may you bear the gentle yoke of Christ"), the feet ("may you walk in the way of Christ"). The ritual text says: "From evangelization ... come the faith and initial conversion that cause a person to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love (RCIA #37)." Discovering the Gospel and developing a personal relationship with Jesus a candidate starts to see what type of conversion he/she must enter.

Well, this is not just true for these candidates. All of us who are journeying with them, we all cannot help but be touched by the Gospel and let our renewed encounter with Jesus change us in a permanent way. Together with the candidates we are all called to a conversion. We know that we have a lifetime to continue to grow in Christ. But each day of our life is a matter of deciding if the Gospel is worth living and if we have the courage to accept it with our whole mind and heart.

Just as Easter is not the end of the process of initiation for the candidates in the RCIA program, so it is for all of us journeying with them. The whole liturgical year with its great variety of readings is a necessary catechesis to begin to teach all of us the fullness of our faith. Even for the younger children this is true. For the last two years we have a catechesis for the children at the grade 2-4 level which is based on the Lectionary (the Sunday readings) and which includes the basic elements of the beginning of the Mass. We have asked that at least one of the parents, preferably both, be there to accompany their children, but also to participate themselves in the journey and thus to come to a fuller and deeper understanding. We need to remember that this journeying-with-us on the part of a segment of the community is going on while we begin each Sunday's celebration. And I am not just talking of the people attending at 10:30 on Sunday morning and who see all these children and adults come in after the homily to join the rest of the community for the Eucharist. I also mean that all parishioners at the Saturday 5:00 pm and at the Sunday 8:30 am celebrations need to feel connected in their hearts, in their minds, in their prayers to those journeying with us: the children and parents, the candidates of the RCIA. We are all on a journey of conversion and we do so together.

Several youth in their teens are also preparing for confirmation, accompanied by their peers in a small group of about ten. It is a wonderful opportunity for these young men and women to be active witnesses for each other. On Sunday March 5 we will celebrate with them the rite of welcome.

All of this reminds us all how each one of us, and all of us, we are called to a full and active participation in the Liturgy so that little by little we can become in our daily life full, conscious and active witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

