

HOMILY ~ THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

MAY 11/12, 2024

I was reading an interesting study done with wall-eyed pike. A pike was placed into a tank with minnows, which is food for wall-eyed pike. But there was a pane of glass in the middle of the tank that separated the pike from the minnows. At first, the pike would repeatedly bang into the glass, over and over again, to reach the minnows. Eventually the pike would give up. The interesting thing is that once the glass was removed, the wall-eyed pike would not chase after the minnows. In fact, the minnows could swim all around the pike, even bumping into its mouth; and the pike would not eat them. In fact, the researchers found that the wall-eyed pike would starve to death before they would eat the minnows. Once they learned that they could not get at the minnows, they would not change regardless of the evidence that was presented to the contrary.

I think this was the situation at the time of the Ascension that we heard about in the Readings today. While Jesus was with the Disciples physically, they did not do much of anything on their own. Jesus was always trying to get them to help, like when he multiplied the loaves and fishes and he told them to bring to him what they had and serve the people; but they did little on their own. Then after the Resurrection, Jesus made many post resurrection appearances; but they were still not doing much on their own. In fact, at the time of the Ascension, they were asking Jesus if he was going to restore the kingdom of Israel. *No. I am going to the Father. I will be back, but do not worry about when. It is now up to you to get on with spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I will be with you in Spirit, but you have to do the work.* I think they learned that Jesus took care of everything, and they would not change until he made a dramatic exit.

We are now living in the post Ascension period, and it is up to us to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. If we are going to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we have to be willing to change. But sometimes, just like the wall-eyed pike, despite all of the evidence to the contrary, we will not change. There are reasons why we are resistant to change. First of all, changing can be a lot of work. *"I worked through that ten years ago, and I am not about to change."* Well, that may be a good idea, but I think we need to develop a more scientific mind set. Someone who has a scientific mindset looks for facts that are inconsistent with their opinion; and if it disproves their position, they are willing to change.

Resistance to change is what we saw during COVID. People were frustrated because they kept changing the guidelines. They were changing the guidelines because they kept learning more in research. There were some people that just could not change once they learned what they were supposed to do. There are people that are still stuck in their isolation. I have a friend with the scientific mindset. It seemed that every time I talked to her about something, she had changed her mind. It was irritating at first, but when I realized that she was open to change based upon new information, she helped me to do the same.

Another reason why we are resistant to change is if you only get your news and information from social media. Because of the way social media monitors and keeps track of what you focus upon, you keep getting more of the same. You never get the opposing point of view; and even if the facts you are getting are wrong, they keep feeding you more incorrect facts so that they seem correct.

We also sometimes get stuck in our life at the Parish. People tend to come to the same Mass each week and sit in the same seat. You are probably introducing yourselves to the same people every week. You may want to switch it up. *I come to Mass every Sunday, but I do not stay for coffee and donuts. Try staying. Or maybe I stay, but I talk to the same people every weekend.* Talk to someone you do not know. *"I will get more involved in the Parish when my children are grown, or when I retire, or when I have more time."* If you keep doing that, you will be dead before you get involved. We tend to do the same thing in our personal prayer every day. If you feel stuck, try something different. Get a new prayer book, try a new app on your phone, just sit in silence with the Lord, try coming to Adoration, read Scripture, try meditation.

People frequently tell me that they do not know what God is calling them to do. Maybe this is because you are not willing to change what you are doing. The Holy Spirit is like the wind, we do not know where he comes from and we do not know where he goes, but he is frequently calling us to do something we do not expect. That is sometimes how I know it is the Holy Spirit. I would have never come up with that on my own. Be open to what is going on in your life. Be curious. Do not assume that you already have everything figured out. Develop a scientific mindset, and be open to change. That is how we will find out what God is calling us to do.

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim