



# The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

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## UPS AND DOWNS OF FOLLOWING JESUS:3RD SUNDAY EASTER C

Let me tell you a true story about a young girl, who said to her father one day: 'Dad, I would like to play the harp.' Her father was sympathetic but tried to discourage his daughter from pursuing that dream. 'They cost a lot of money,' he said, 'and your mum is very sick. 'But I'll work my holidays and Saturdays,' she answered. 'It's impossible, you're only 14.' her dad retorted. But with dogged determination, she stuck to her plans until with her mother's illness she could work no longer. She had saved \$1200, but where do you find a harp for \$1200? It seemed like a busted dream. But then the impossible happened. Call it coincidence or call it divine providence? A harp teacher told her of an older woman who had a very good harp and no longer played it. The teacher said she would ask on the girl's behalf. That very day the lady with the harp happened to be home for the first time in three years. 'Yes,' she said: 'I still have the harp and I will sell it to the young girl for what she can afford.' Not only that! She offered to teach her how to play it without the usual fees. Soon the girl's family home was echoing day after day to the beautiful sounds of the harp.

We human beings are full of purpose and plans, goals, objectives, and targets. The possibility of achieving them leads us to make far-reaching changes in our lives. This is illustrated by our decision, renewed on Easter Sunday, to reject sin and evil and to follow Jesus in a life of unselfish loving.

Experience suggests that involvement in the life of the Church and its goals is mostly an experience of fulfilment and hope. Experience also suggests that this is not always the case, since sometimes we may have frustrations and failures, disappointments and discouragement. At such times we might come face to face with our frailty and inadequacy, as well as that of others.

For the sake of continuing our commitment, it will help to reflect on the situation of the disciples in today's gospel reading. Seven of them are mentioned. To their credit they had previously responded to the invitation of Jesus to be his companions, to share his mission of making the kingdom of God happen on earth, and to share his activities of teaching, helping, and healing for the kingdom. In their shared life and work, they have known times of elation, excitement, and high achievement. But right now, it has all come to an abrupt end. Jesus their beloved Master, has been arrested, sentenced, and killed.

Right now, they are grief-stricken and feeling that without his presence, his inspiration and guidance, his support and encouragement, they simply cannot go on. So, in this gospel scene, we find them many miles from Jerusalem, the place of the crucifixion, and the scene of their failures and disappointments. They have returned to Galilee and their former occupations.

It's within this situation of disappointed hopes and broken dreams that Jesus comes back into their lives. Not simply as Jesus of Nazareth this time, but as the Risen Lord, powerful and empowering. The details of the story of this meeting suggest that Jesus is forgiving them for abandoning him and his mission, that he is re-commissioning them to continue his life and work, and that he is strengthening their resolve to re-commit.

Their human weakness is dramatized in their failure to catch any fish. But the encouragement and assistance of Jesus change their failure into success. We learn that they haul 'the net to the shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fiftythree of them.' This dramatically represents Jesus re-commissioning them to their previous calling to be 'fishers of people.' It also symbolizes Jesus working with them to ensure the success of their work.

We note also the significance of the breakfast on the beach which Jesus provides. It may be seen as 'a communion breakfast,' in which the presence of Jesus provides nourishment, sustenance, and support to his friends.

The story of the first disciples and their encounter with the Risen One is our story too. We can easily identify with their weaknesses and failures, their despondency and discouragement, their disillusionment and despair. We too can be feeling, at least sometimes: 'I didn't think that my life would work out like this. I thought people would be more appreciative, and be more ready to make allowances. I expected more satisfaction and more meaning than what I'm getting. Is that all there is? So, will I keep belonging to Jesus Christ and keep striving to follow him and work for him?'

When we are thinking and feeling like that, it's clear that we have lost heart. On the other hand, it's a signal, as the saying goes, 'to let go and let God.' Thinking and feeling like that is a signal to us to let the Risen Christ come to us as he came to his first friends, and to give us that new heart, that new Spirit, that new meaning and purpose, and that new energy which they received, and which we need so much. In our Holy Communion with the Risen Jesus today, let's share with him whatever we may be thinking and feeling right now about our friendship with him!

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