

*Ending of the 200th Anniversary Year
Saint Joseph (Buckeystown)*

I'd begin my homily
by wishing all fathers present
a Happy Father's Day!

May all of you dads
enjoy the love of family and friends this day!

Number Game

Choose a number between 2 and 9.
Multiply that number by 9.

You now have a 2 digit number.
Take those two digits separately and add them together.
You now have a one digit number.

Subtract 5 from that one digit number.

That number corresponds to a letter.

1 = A

2 = B and so on.

Think of the name of a country that begins with the letter that corresponds to your number.

Now take the last letter in the name of that country and think of the name of an animal-

But remember – there are no kangaroos in Denmark.

Numbers are important.

For you, as a parish community, the number is, of course – 200.

You are nearing the end of your 200th anniversary year.

You have had opportunity to reflect on your past, your heritage, your history and who you are as a parish in light of these things.

You know your heritage –
the land of this parish was a gift
of Charles Carroll of Carrollton.

He deeded the land
so that a Roman Catholic Church
could be built here.

That gift was given in September of 1814 –
the same year our National Anthem was composed.

Your parish has had
a rich history here in Frederick County –
sharing Jesuit roots
with other communities.

But now here we are today,
with our gaze set
not behind us –
but before us.

The question that is so important for you
as a parish community –
where do you go from here?

What lay ahead?

What is it that God wishes of St. Joseph Parish
in this time,
this place?

Well – surely there have been
calm waters and rough seas
in the course of 200 years –

so let's look to the scriptures
for guidance.

The gospel today
is that familiar story
of Jesus and his disciples
in the boat during a storm
on the Sea of Galilee.

The difference in attitude
between Jesus and his disciples
makes for an interesting comparison.

The disciples are filled with fear
as the storm threatens them.
They are paralyzed by their fear.

Jesus, on the other hand,
rests within the storm –
trusting that God will take care
to keep the storm within its limits –
as God keeps the ocean within its limits
in that first reading from Job.

Jesus has that innate trust
that the divine presence rules the world
and puts all things in their place.

When, in their fear,
the disciples reach out to Jesus –
when they wake him up
they are amazed at his actions –

for he calms the raging waters,
he quiets the storm –
leaving them awestruck.

To do such a thing
is to do the work of the divine!

It is clear that this experience
deepens the insight of the disciples
about who Jesus is.

The actions and attitude of Jesus in this story.
point to something larger
than what is happening
on the surface here.

That something larger
is about the pattern of how Jesus approach all things.
He had a deep and abiding trust
in the presence and the power of the Divine One.

Even when he encountered
the raging storms of cruelty,
injustice and oppression –
whether in his own life
or in the lives of others,
he calmed the storm
and called people
to a new vision of
how history was to happen
in the unfolding Kingdom of God.

Even during the storm of
the cruelty and injustice
surrounding his own passion and death –
he awoke from the sleep of death
to calm the storms
that had seemingly overcome his life.

I think it is fair to say
that the experience of the disciples
reflects our own experience in life.

Look at the state of our world.

The destruction wrought by ISIS –
religious zealotry gone terribly awry!

The ongoing tensions in the Middle-East,
and between Russia and Ukraine.

And – of course, our own nation is not exempt
from destructive forces.

The chaos unleashed in Baltimore in late April
points to a deep disruption in relationships
that are vital to order and safety for citizens.

And of course, this very week,
we mourn that racism has once again
reared its ugly head
in the form of the shooting and killing
of nine people gathered for prayer
at a Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

We are threatened from every side,
we could find ourselves disheartened
and living in a state of fear.

We are, in short –
in the midst of a storm,
a tempest is raging around us.

We might be led to ask –
has God abandoned us?

And of course –
the message of the scriptures is clear –
NO God has not abandoned us.

Rather – God is with us,
in the midst of the storms of life.

God calls us to trust
that all will be well
if we but trust in his abiding presence,
in his power over all things and all situations.

Yes – it might well be a mystery to us
how God is present,
how God is active in our world at times –
but we are to trust.

And the substance of that trust
is what Paul address
in the passage from Second Corinthians.

For Paul – Christ’s crucifixion
is the pivotal moment in history
when the whole meaning and direction
of human history is

re-made,
re-focused,
and
re-ordered.

Paul asks us to see
that the death of Christ
and our own incorporation into that death
is the moment out of which
a new creation has already begun.

And what is the message
of that new creation?

Nothing short of this –
that Jesus has risen from the sleep of death
to conquer and calm
the chaos and the storms
that threaten our lives,
and to reveal a new creation.

We are called to rest secure in this truth –
and, in the end,
to realize that we have no need to fear
the inevitable tumult that happens around us,

for a new order has already begun
and the Kingdom of God is at hand.

And so it is for you
who are the parish, the community
of Saint Joseph's –

by trusting that God is here in our midst,
you are made into a new creation,
again and again –
emerging from your rich history,
to be the community you are today.

You are made into a new creation,
again and again,
as you gather to be nourished
for the work that is ahead of you.

You have defined that work yourselves –
it is reflected in your beautiful Vision Statement –

you form a community of relationships
for shared prayer, faith formation and service –
through Word, Worship and Works
that are the heart of being
an Evangelizing community of faith.

Again – those beautiful words of Paul . . .

*So whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come.*

Paul's invitation to behold the new things –
and the gospel story of the storm
bring to mind

the refrain of The Quaker Hymn –

*No storm can shake my inmost calm,
while to that rock I'm clinging,
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?*

And so –
we let our hearts sing!

because LOVE –
the Lord of heaven and earth
will heal all divisions,

Love will set all things aright,

Love will calm all stormy seas,

Love invites us
to cross to the other side –

where we will behold
the new things that have come!