

HOMILY ASCENSION YRA 2017

My first assignment after ordination was at Our Lady of Good Council. Before I was ordained they knew that one of the newly ordained was going to be assigned to their parish but they did not know which one. Fr. John Sullivan, the Pastor at the time, told a group of people that we should go to the ordination and be part of it because we know that one of these new priests is coming here, and they did. One of them told me later: “We did not know which one of you we would get, so it was kind of like picking a puppy. We decided that we wanted you because you looked so happy!” And I was, so happy, not because I finished a degree, not because I was ordained, but because I was so excited to begin my ministry. I was so happy and excited about celebrating Mass and the sacraments and doing everything that priests do. I knew I had a lot to learn about how to do that, but I was so excited to get started.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. I wonder how the 11 apostles felt on that day. They had just spent 3 years with Jesus their teacher, just like I spent 6 years in the seminary. After the resurrection, Jesus made all of those appearances to his disciples so they would understand that he is alive, he has destroyed death forever, he will be with them always, their own immortality was confirmed, he will send the Holy Spirit to be with them. Now it was time for them to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world and continue his ministry, to go out to all of the world to teach and baptize. They must have been happy and excited to begin the ministry that they had spent years preparing to do. Scripture scholars tell us there were only about 120 disciples left by the time of the Ascension. They must have been happy and excited by their ministry or they never would have been able to bring thousands and thousands of people into the Church. I feel very much called to be a pastor, which means that my primary ministry is to the people who come here. It is up to all of you to bring Jesus out into the world and invite them to the Church. As Christians we are all called to play our part, we each have a calling.

And we do have many different callings. Mother Theresa just recently became a Saint. What was Mother Theresa's call? She was called to help the poor one person at a time. There are those who criticized Mother Theresa for taking this person to person approach. There are those who thought that she should have spent her time alleviating poverty by changing the social structures that kept people poor. She told them that that is not her call. Her call was to faithfully serve the poor in Calcutta. That is how she brought Jesus to the world. It was someone else's calling to change the social structures that kept people poor.

We all have a call and when we find it we will be very happy and excited to do it. If you are someone who befriends people easily, you should reach out to people who are alone and isolated. Let them know that you love them that Jesus loves them, and they have a place in Church where they belong. If you are someone who provides professional services like a teacher, doctor, lawyer, counselor, stop looking at them as paying customers and love them as Jesus loves them. If you can fix things, find a way to reach out to the poor and elderly and fix some things for free. If you feel called to serve the poor, volunteer at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Let them know they are loved. If you are comfortable being around people who are dying, volunteer at a hospital like St. Mary that has a no one dies alone program. Be a compassionate companion for someone who would otherwise die alone. You could bring the love of Jesus to someone in their final days. We all have a calling and if you do not do it, it will not get done. So, how is Jesus calling you to be his hands and feet in the world?