

HOMILY 2NS SUN EASTER YRB 2018

How many of you are familiar with Dr. Wayne Dyer? He is a native Detroit, he earned 3 degrees from Wayne State University, and has written many self-help books, the first one being *Your Erroneous Zones*. He tells a story about going to his 25 year high school reunion. At the reunion he met a former classmate with whom he had a secret crush for 4 years. She was beautiful and confident even in high school; any Dyer could not get up enough courage to ask her out. At the reunion she told him that she had a secret crush on him through all of high school and would have been thrilled to go out with him if he had only asked. His fear robbed him of the opportunity to date the girl of his dreams. Sometimes fear prevents us from doing things. Was the fear reasonable? Twenty five years later he can say no. The worst that could happen is that she would have said no, and if that would have happened he would have gone on living.

In the Gospel reading, the disciples were locked in the upper room for fear of the Jews. Was this fear reasonable? Probably not at that time. If they wanted to arrest and kill the apostles they could have done that when they arrested Jesus, but they did not. But the disciples did feel fear, and they did one thing right. They stayed together as a small community and I think this made a big difference. Jesus appeared to them as a group. Jesus could have appeared to them individually if they had scattered, but who knows what their reaction would have been if they had been alone. Their faith in Jesus was just about gone, but as a group they could support one another. “Did you just see what I thought I saw?” Maybe they could have figured it out individually, but the chances of success were much greater doing it together. I have come to realize that this is one of the huge positives of organized religion. If we gather together as a faith community at least once a week, we can support each other. Maybe we can figure it out alone, but the chances of being successful is much greater as a group than it is if we try and do it alone. I urge you to come regularly and try and get to know people in the community. This can be a great support on the spiritual journey.

In this Gospel passage alone, Jesus offers the disciples peace three times. This peace is a great gift that comes with faith in Jesus Christ. It is an inner peace that comes from knowing that Jesus is alive and he is with us and caring for us all the time. Sometimes we wonder why Jesus does not just take care of everything so we can live in a world of unconditional love where nothing bad ever happened to anyone, and that is what God created us to experience, but that all changed when sin entered the world. When we sin we hurt others, even people we do not know in ways that we are not aware of. We will experience that unconditional love for all eternity when we get to heaven, so I want to make sure I get there. Jesus cares for us in the sense that he will guide us through our difficulties. If we are hurt along the way, he will heal us. We will still have scars, like Jesus retained the scars of the crucifixion, but I have come to realize that we want to keep the scars. It is the scars that make us real, that make us who we are, that make us wise. Jesus will make something good come from our struggles if we let him.

And I think the disciples supported one another until they found that peace, the peace that only comes from faith in Jesus Christ. In the beginning of the Gospel reading the fear that the disciples were feeling was probably unreasonable. However, once they found peace and decided to continue the work of Jesus, there was a real fear that they would end up being killed, as Jesus was killed. Ultimately 11 of the 12 apostles were martyred. I think they must have been aware of the risks, but they did what Jesus was calling them to do. Because they found that inner peace, they were able to feel the fear and do it anyway because they knew it was what they were meant to do. And I am glad they did. If they had remained in the upper room in fear, we would probably not be there today.

Sometimes fear is good. It prevents us from taking unnecessary risks. However, if we are really going to do what we were meant to do in this life, we need to take some risks. If we have faith in Jesus Christ, if we support one another as a community of faith, we can find the inner peace that

comes with that faith. What are you afraid of? Is the fear reasonable? Is the fear preventing you from doing what you were meant to do? Maybe you need to feel the fear and do it anyway.