

HOMILY 4TH SUN LENT YRB 2018

This week I read a story about a ship that was blown off course and came across a group of uncharted islands. The ship's captain decided to stop and explore the little islands. They discovered a scene of total despair, poverty, hunger, illness and discord. The people were dispirited and demoralized. At the fifth island they stopped at, was totally different. The people were strong, able bodied and had a bright outlook. The captain asked the people why they seemed to be doing much better than the people on the other islands. He was told that Fr. Benjamin educated the people on everything from agriculture to health. He built schools, roads and irrigation systems. The captain wanted to meet Fr. Benjamin, so he said: "Show me where Fr. Benjamin lives." They took him around different buildings and to the fields where they were growing vegetables, but he did not find Fr. Benjamin there. He asked then again: "Show me where Fr. Benjamin lives." So they led him up a mountain and, where there was a little chapel. He asked: "Is this where Fr. Benjamin lives?" They said "Yes." He said: "good, I would like to meet him." They said: "This will be impossible because he died a number of years ago." The captain asked: "Why didn't you tell me this earlier?" They said: "because you said you wanted to see where he lives, not where he died." Fr. Benjamin still lived all over that island.

In the second reading we heard: "For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance that we should live in them." We are God's handiwork and we are to do the good works that God has prepared for us and we should live in them. Fr. Benjamin was certainly God's handiwork. And I believe he was very connected to the plan that God had for him and he certainly lived in those good works.

We are all God's handiwork. God has a unique set of good works that God intends for us to carry out. Each of us has a unique set of gifts and charisms that we are called to use to live in those good works. If we do not carry out the plan that God has for us, there are things that will just not get done. So how do you figure out the good works that God has planned for you? First of all you have to discover your charisms. That is what our Lent series is all about. They gave us an instrument to help us identify our charisms. The instrument helps, but you do not need it to identify your charisms. A charism is a gift or ability given to you by the Holy Spirit. Each person has a unique set of charisms and everyone has them. The Holy Spirit gave you these charisms to help

others. When you work within these charisms you can do great things that you could never accomplish alone, because you are working with the Holy Spirit. If you do not use them to help other people, if you are not using them or are using them for personal gain, they are not charisms. If you try to use a charism to do evil, the charism will go away. Charisms are things that you have just been able to do. You can develop them and improve in these areas, but there was something there that you built upon. If a number of people seek you out for the same reason, they may sense your charism even if you have not identified it yourself. For example, people have told me that others are always telling you all kinds of personal things about themselves, even total strangers. You may have the charism of encouragement. You may be unaware of charisms because you have not tried them yet. Older people are more aware of their charisms because they have generally tried more different things in their lives. I have found that people undervalue their charisms. People tell me: "That is no big deal; it is just something I could always do." If you do good works within your charisms, this is where you can really do great things. I think we spend far too much time trying to overcome our weaknesses. We should let go of our weaknesses as much as possible and focus upon our charisms because this is where we can shine.

So what about Fr. Benjamin? Do you think he built those buildings and created the irrigation system and accomplished all of those things himself? No, it would have taken a village. So what was his charism? I believe he probably had the charism of administration. Administrators make and execute the plans that will make the vision happen. This is different from the charism of leadership. The person with the charism of leadership would have identified the problem and developed the vision needed to solve it. Someone else probably had that charism. My guess is that Fr. Benjamin never actually built a building or worked in a field. There were probably people who had the charism of craftsmanship that could do that. You see, it was not all about Fr. Benjamin, it was about everyone working together to use their charisms for the good of others.

So spend some time praying about this today. What are your charisms? How can you share them with others? You are God's handiwork. Live in the good works that God has planned for you.