

EASTER HOMILY APRIL 16/17, 2022

The writer, Clarence Harvey, tells a story about an experience he had as a very young boy. One year he spent his summer by a lake. He decided to take his pet goldfish with him. After he was there for a few weeks, he decided to set his goldfish free. He went down to the dock with his fish bowl and had a little talk with his fish. *"I am going to throw you into this lake. You will be free. You can swim around this big lake and grow up to be a big fish."* Clarence put the fish into the water, and he just stayed right there swimming around in circles. He moved back so the fish could not see him; and after he was sure the fish would be gone, he stepped back and the fish was still there. He threw a stone into the water to scare it away, but it just kept swimming around in circles. Just then his mother called him for lunch. When he finished lunch, he went back to the dock and the fish was still swimming in the same place. He told the fish: *"You are free. You have a whole lake to swim in now."* Suddenly a big bass swallowed the little goldfish. He later found out that once a goldfish becomes used to living in a small fish bowl, it has become conditioned to thinking small. It will stay there until it dies. Now we can all tell the difference between a fish bowl and a lake, but sometimes we get conditioned to think small. We get into our comfort zone and do not want to get out of it or are afraid to get out. Or we are on automatic pilot through habit and are not thinking about what we are doing. We can come to settle for a life that is OK rather than a life that is great. We can move toward a great life one step at a time with the help of God and the people that he brings into our lives.

Today we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus has set us free. He has destroyed death forever. He is calling us to new life, a life that is great, one step at a time. But just like that goldfish, we may be conditioned to think small. On that first Easter morning, Jesus was calling the disciples to be great; but they were in different places in terms of moving on to new life. Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, went to the tomb early in the morning to anoint Jesus. They found the tomb empty, and two angels told them that Jesus had been raised. They remembered that Jesus told them before he died that he would suffer and die and be raised on the third day. They did not understand it then, but they did now. The women were the first disciples to figure out that Jesus was alive. They went back and told the apostles who thought it seemed like nonsense and did not believe them. They were conditioned to thinking small. Peter went to the empty tomb and went home

amazed but was not sure what to make of the whole situation. They were in three different places in terms of their faith, but they joined together in the upper room. They experienced some of the post resurrection appearances together and helped one another move forward. Eventually they left the upper room and began to spread the good news; and I am glad they did because that is why we are here today. We would not be here if they stayed in the upper room. They moved to new life with the help of God and one another.

Jesus has set us all free again today in a new way. Like the disciples that first Easter, we are in different places on our spiritual journey; and we must continue to move forward to new life. I think all of us have been locked away in the upper room like the disciples in different ways because of COVID, but it is time to come out. COVID is not going to go away completely so we need to learn to live with it like we have learned to live with the common cold and the flu. We cannot stay in the fish bowl forever. That is not healthy. I think we have come to see the world as a hostile place. In our isolation, we have come to see interactions with the people around us as threatening. I need to keep you at arm's length because you may make me sick. If you spend a lot of time watching the news and on social media, it is easy to come to this conclusion. We have come to see our opinions as fact, and anyone who has a different opinion is just wrong. I am saddened by the number of people who tell me that they are not speaking to family or friends because they do not agree politically. We need to listen to one another and work that out. What is more important, our relationships with family and friends or politics? I refuse to accept all of that. We need to resist becoming part of the hostility in the world. In my experience, most people are basically good people. That is what I experience in my life every day. And some of us have gotten out of the habit of going to Mass every weekend. I guarantee you that if you start coming to Mass regularly, your life will get better. There is not a lot of hostility here; and our Parish family is basically good, kind and loving. We are not perfect, but we are moving forward together. Your children will see some really good role models, and we can help one another. We tend to copy the behavior we see around us, and I guarantee what you see at St. Edith is much better than what you see on the news and on social media. You will get closer to God, and you will become a better person. So, get out of the fish bowl. Do not settle for a life that is OK. We can have a life that is great with the help of God and one another.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim