

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC CHURCH

AS SUMMER APPROACHES. . .

We live in a fast paced world! But you know that already. Each year technology improves and the pace of life accelerates. With the ever-quickening pace comes an even higher expectation of accomplishment. What we expected to do last year in a day, we expect to accomplish in 4 hours today. What took a week to accomplish a decade ago ought to only take a day in 2006. With that added time we ought to do more work. In the end, it's a vicious circle. We work harder and faster, only to find that there is more work to be done in less time.

This life is also deceptive. We are led to believe that all things are possible if only we work harder and faster, everything will get done. In the end, it's simply not true. There is always something else. There is always a new project or task; there is always more work.

What then are we to do? Do we continue to push on in the hopes of a rest that will never truly come? Should we work hard today in the hopes that somehow the frantic pace of life will ebb?

Certainly, that is an option but a false option, I would say. While we can live with the hope that the pace of life will someday slow, history has proven otherwise. On the contrary, everything indicates that the already hurried pace will accelerate all the more.

Thankfully, there is another choice; that is, to learn to live with the frenetic pace at which the world moves. If we continue to run full speed, believing that we will breathe again when the time permits, we turn life into a sprint, which it is not. On the contrary, life is more akin to an endurance race, moving slowly but surely ahead. The pace is faster than we might choose for ourselves, but we can keep up so long as we breathe!

Summer is, hopefully, part of our breathing. Summer is a time that permits even encourages rest and refreshment. Summer is a time to slow down and do those things that restore the body and soul.

As summer approaches, embrace the slower pace. Allow yourself to be re-nourished and refreshed. Life will continue and the pace will pick up again. But today we need to breathe.

The Rev. Andrew Van Culin.

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

Today we celebrate one of the tenets of our creed: that the Lord ascended into heaven. From Mark's Gospel we hear the final words Jesus spoke to his disciples shortly before he ascended into heaven. Those were words of commissioning, no less real for us today than they were to the disciples then. We are called to "proclaim the gospel to every creature." For the vast majority of us, this means that we proclaim the gospel by the witness of our everyday lives. Treating others with dignity and respect, providing for those less fortunate than ourselves, being good stewards of the many gifts showered on us, coming together as God's family in worship and praise—these are all signs that the gospel has taken root in our lives.

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My Dear People:

Today's feast of the Ascension of the Lord stands at the heart and soul of what it means to be the Church. Being the Church is hard work. I'm sure the Disciples didn't totally realize that when the Lord commissioned them on the day of His Ascension to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature. Eventually, though, they would find out the truth of the statement that being the Church is indeed hard work. The witness and martyrdom of those first century Christians bears witness to that truth.

Being the Church is hard work because Jesus Christ is truly present in the Church, and there's no sense in double-talking what he wanted and expected from his followers: Lay down your life. Take up your cross. Jesus expects no less and no more from us than he expected from his first followers. How ready and willing are we to do the hard work of being the Church?

Today we celebrate and observe milestones of the Church in our midst. They are significant to us because of our involvement in this parish. And we have every right to be proud of them and of our own individual accomplishments. But, in the span of the Church's 2,000 year history fifteen or thirty-five years seems to pale in insignificance. Looking at them in the light of our Church's history we can say with the Scriptural Words; we have done no more than is our duty. And yet we realize that it hasn't always been easy; we know first-hand that being the church is hard work.

Of course, hard work has its rewards. We see people coming to faith and striving to live the Gospel life. We baptize children, marry frightened young (and old) couples, we anointed the suffering and dying, we lead prayers over the life-less bodies of our fellow believers. We absolve the sins of those who are truly penitent. And most importantly we set the Lord's Table and make Eucharist in the Lord's name. Hard work -- yes. God's work -- Certainly. Blessed work -- absolutely. It's all part of the answer we make to the Lord's call.

I had wanted to be a priest for as long as I can remember. The allure of the mystery of the Church's ancient liturgy beckoned me from the first time I remember being at Mass. The sights, sounds, and smells of the ancient ritual have the power to draw one into the very mystery of an all Holy God. That power just draws one and leads one to places unimagined. For that personally I am extremely grateful. To stand "in persona Christi" -- in the place of Christ himself is an experience which only the ordained can fully appreciate. However, ordination is not for oneself but for the whole church, that is, God's people. And that truth we also celebrate today.

Well, today I invite you to celebrate the Church, especially The Body of Christ in this place. Being the Church has been hard work at times. We have experienced growth and decline, financial gain and set-backs, building renovation and constant building maintenance, leaking roofs and subsequent repairs. We have seen hundreds of children baptized and hundreds of parishioners buried. All of this is part of the rhythm of life and God's plan for us. And that is reason enough for us to celebrate that God has chosen us to be the Church in this place. And if that is hard work, so be it!

**In Christ
Father Merold**