

May 13-14, 2017

Thoughts from the pastor,

Happy Mother's Day. Without a Mom, none of us would be in existence. It wasn't just Mary that had to say yes.

These past couple of weeks I have been reflecting on why people joined the Church in the first century. The first group, which included the apostles, joined because they had a personal invitation from Jesus. They heard Him and saw what He could do. They felt He was worth following for they wanted to be a part of what He was offering. Some of that first group might have weakened for a while but they were probably reconnected because of how many people witnessed the resurrection.

The second group joined at Pentecost. My guess is most of these people had six weeks to stew about how far many of the Jewish people had turned away from the good in cheering for the crucifixion. They knew that, even at their worst as shown in the Old Testament, they had never been that bad. So with the witnesses to the resurrection, like Peter and the other apostles, proclaiming that Jesus was alive and ready to forgive, they felt they needed forgiveness. They would also have recalled the miracles of Jesus and His promise of eternal life. Peter also helped them understand how Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies of their Scripture, our Old Testament. So when Peter invited them to be baptized, they were ready. Three thousand were added that day.

Shortly after that large group joined, there was a backlash. The first we hear of that persecution was the story of St. Stephen being martyred. This movement against the followers of Jesus grew, so many of the believers moved to other areas and started to spread the news to other countries. Some of the people in those countries became believers at the testimony of those believers. Most of those were Jews who would also have been greatly influenced by the way Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of their Scripture. This would have coincided with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. At that point, the focus of the Jewish faith seemed to have been crushed, so they turned to the New Temple, the Body of Christ.

The Acts of the Apostles also talks of the Gentiles who became believers. They would have felt less of a connection to the idea of Jesus fulfilling prophecy, but the miracles would have meant a lot to them. Since the apostles were performing miracles in the name of Jesus, they wouldn't have had problems making the connections to the miracles of Jesus himself. But there was another factor. It was not usually the people in power who became followers. Considering the average life-span at that time would have been 35 years old, the idea of resurrection was attractive. The other factor would have been that Jesus' message resounded with the poor, which was most of the population. For them to hear that God loved them was a new and wonderful thought. This life seemed only to be good for the rich, but the next life was to be good to the poor.

Over the centuries since then there have been many different reasons why people joined the Church. Some of the most brilliant minds in the world joined because the message made sense. What each of us needs to reflect on is why we are a part of the Church. When Archbishop Curtiss was here, he reflected the Vision of Archbishop Lucas' message that the main reason to follow Christ now is because we have had an experience of Him. I will try to do more reflections on that in the next couple weeks.

Last but not least I want to thank the Santos family, Hannah Keisling, James Costello, and Fr. Cleary for making the concert so wonderful. We made over \$4,000 toward the \$7,000 matching funds challenge. There is still a chance to help with that. More information on this is also coming next week.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank