19 Sunday B

August 12, 2018

St. Patrick

Last week the volunteer archivists of St. Patrick’s gave, unsolicited by me, an intriguing detail about our history as a parish. Since our founding in 1866, there have been 7357 baptisms here at St. Patrick’s!

Now, St. Patrick’s, baptism *is* the most important sacrament! And this Sunday, the New Testament Letter to the Ephesians reminds us that, in baptism, we were **“sealed for the day of redemption.”** You see, when we were baptized, each of us was sealed by the anointing with the holy oil right after we were drenched with water three times in baptism. That sealing celebrates that we, as a gift, become part of a priestly, kingly and holy people. In fact, *all* of us baptized, we become together a holy temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Now, reminding us of our baptism in this letter, St. Paul gives us a startling warning this Sunday: **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption.”**

Oh, we’ve seen pictures of the grief of those whose homes and, in some cases, lives of loved ones, have been lost because of horrific fires raging uncontrollably in California.

Grieving. We’ve been present when those close to us are grieving almost hysterically. And yes, at some time or another, each of us has grieved deeply—because of a death of a loved one, or some crushing news or setback.

Grief.

Friends: Have we ever fathomed that we can cause such grief—*in the Holy Spirit?* **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.”**

And St. Paul spells out precisely what causes pain within the Holy Spirit, what grieves the Holy Spirit. Listen again: **“All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with malice.”**

Oh, those words stand out—within our world today, and within our diocesan church. Especially in these times, we need to hear *that*—God’s Word! In public officials, in social media, that listing of offenses has become accepted. It’s become acceptable to lash out and disrespect another with whom we’re at odds. At school, it’s called “checking.” And, sisters and brothers, how often does that anger well up within our homes, and then explode, among those to whom we are the closest?

Now, this doesn’t mean we become “milk toast,” easy targets. With respect, we can face the one who does us wrong and clearly lodge our complaints (or, if necessary, to that person’s supervisor). That’s a far cry from gossip—behind their back, putting someone on trial.

Have we ever thought that such bitterness, such anger—*these* cause the Holy Spirit to **“grieve”**? Did we ever fathom that we had that much sway over the Holy Spirit?

St. Paul calls us to forgive others—not because the other guys are right, or fair, or even good. **“As God has forgiven you in Christ”—**that’s how the Apostle puts it—*then*, **“forgive one another.”**

On the positive side, because of our baptismal consecration, the Apostle Paul calls us to **“be kind to one another, compassionate.”**

Compassionate. A few days ago, it happened in a convenience store in Baton Rouge. The video went viral on social media—thousands by thousands mesmerized by the story. A 20-year-old employee, Jordan Taylor, was stacking bottles of orange juice in the store cooler. A 17-year-older with autism, named Jack Ryan Edwards, was watching at the cooler. The employee asked Jack Ryan, “Hey, do you want to help me?” The autistic youth, verbally limited, repeated, “Help me.” So, for the next half hour, the autistic youth methodically stored orange juice bottles in the cooler, with the young employee’s patient support. The autistic youth’s father, Sid Edwards, a high school football coach, videoed the episode, and said on tape as he recorded, “I’m watching a miracle in action.” Then he said, “What I’ve learned is our world doesn’t accept autistic kids. It’s impossible for those kids to enter our world. We spend so much time working on that, but this man figured it out in eight seconds: He went into Jack’s world.” (1)

Compassion, literally, means to “suffer with.” That 20-year-old employee went into the world of that autistic teenager. He went into *his* world—with compassion.

St. Patrick’s: In a world so torn and divided, we’re to remember we’ve been **“sealed”** and consecrated in baptism. On the one side, going against the angry tide of our society these days, we’re not to **“grieve the Holy Spirit”** by outbursts of venom and fury. And, on the positive side, in everyday life (as in a Baton Rouge convenience store) we’re to bring alive compassion and reconciliation. All of us: *show* that we’re sealed in the Holy Spirit!

1. Quoted by Elyse Samuels, “Grocery store worker lets autistic teen stock shelves, causing a ‘miracle in action’” in The Washington Post (August 2, 2018)@www.washingtonpost.com.

***General Intercessions***

***August 12, 2018 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time***

**You establish an everlasting covenant with your people: empower all the baptized to proclaim Christ in deeds of compassion and reconciliation; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You make us part of the Diocese of Memphis in West Tennessee: bring healing to our church, so that the Holy Spirit might lead us in our future together; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You give dignity to every human being: lead us to reject the death penalty, direct abortion, and our proclivities to war; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You raise up those who are bowed down: lift up those suffering from the fires raging in California, and those facing disasters elsewhere; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You instill your law of love in our hearts: help us to reach out to those who are lonely, burdened, oppressed, or afraid; we pray to you, O Lord—**