

BEING A WITNESS

Jesus, after once again convincing the disciples it is truly Him, Risen, and Alive, tells them to be witnesses to all of this. Starting in Jerusalem, then to all nations, they are to proclaim that the forgiveness of sins has been won on the cross once and for all. Our readings today are laced with the reality of what all this is about. It is about forgiveness. For most, if not all, this is nothing new. We know we are called to be witnesses. We know we are to testify to the Risen Life of Christ and how we come to know Him in the Eucharist. We know the “what” we are witnessing to, but the reality remains as to how. How do we witness?

How do we become a witness of Jesus Christ in the world? How do we show others our trust and belief in Him? Being a witness is not just about the “what” we are witnessing to, it really is about the “how”. I saw incredible witness to the power of Jesus on Easter Sunday. Over 300 cars entered our parking lot to celebrate faith. It takes great faith to show up, listen to Mass on the radio, stand up outside to receive the Eucharist and proclaim the joy of Easter. Over 1000 viewers tuned into YouTube at various times to watch the live stream or the taped experience of the Eucharist for Easter and the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night. This amazes me. Faith is witnessed to by our actions. The outpouring for St. Vincent de Paul is amazing. This allows our team to help others on behalf of all of us.

Actions have brought us together, while not physically, but spiritually. Trust me, I have never been caught up in the social media experience. My friends will tell you they thought I would be the last one to join the electronic world. But to be a witness in these moments of a pandemic, I had to change my attitude and my thoughts and I had to grow in an awareness of the purpose of the message. The message is powerful and I needed to do what God had placed in my heart. When we first closed, I woke up one Saturday morning knowing I would take my iPhone, place it on top of a towel and some books stationed in one place and connect with all of you. After celebrating Eucharist while filming it on that phone, I contacted Rick Llanes, our parishioner, and had him help me upload it. He understood the process. It was about 5 PM that afternoon that we finished the process. I had started at 6 AM. It was learning a whole new world; a place I was never comfortable with and still struggle to embrace.

Being a witness is about the “how” we communicate this message that is vital to our survival, vital to our lives. While my “how” has changed, the real way to be a witness is beyond any connection on YouTube, rather it is about being kind and merciful. The only way we witness to this gift of faith is to live in awe of it each day, seeing its gift and its challenge. It is not getting persuaded by results, but by making a difference in the life of another. What began in Jerusalem dwells in our hearts. It is up to us.

How our world needs kindness, mercy and understanding. If we can show others that, we are making a difference.



Father John Ouper