

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

04/15/12 2 Easter B

-- During the Easter season, our first readings come from the Acts of the Apostles. They show us how the early followers of Jesus slowly gelled into a faith community which spread from Jerusalem out to most of the areas of the Roman Empire.

-- Today's short passage from early in Acts gives a snapshot of the community in Jerusalem in those very early years. It's pretty idealistic, and soon we discover things weren't as smooth as they are shown to be in this passage. (e.g., story of Ananias and Sapphira)

-- Still, it shows us how their way of life was profoundly affected by the power of Jesus' death and resurrection. They tried to live a different lifestyle, a way of harmony, of care for one another, with no envy.

-- Even if they didn't live that way of life perfectly, other people obviously noticed it. This community that followed the Way, as Christians were first called, was different. And, though we can't duplicate their lifestyle in its details, they do demonstrate an attitude of life we should try to imitate.

-- First of all, they are described as being of *one heart and mind*. This doesn't mean that they all had the same opinion on every issue, or that they had a military-like adherence to a detailed way of doing things. This becomes obvious soon enough in the book of Acts.

-- It **does** mean that they were united in the essential things: their faith in the resurrected Jesus, their witness to his life, their care for each other.

-- We share a common faith, and we profess that faith every Sunday when we pray either the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Our faith is not just a set of propositions; it's primarily a belief in the person of Jesus Christ and who he is, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

-- We also hear that *no one claimed anything as his own but that they held all things in common*. Now, that one troubles us. It smacks of

communism to many people. But this was not an economic system for them, but an attitude of life.

-- Total sharing of possessions didn't last a long time, even in that community. Still, that witness has been carried on in the Church by religious orders who do share all in common. And it also reminds us that we are all called to avoid envy and that we should be willing to share with those in need.

-- It tells Churches and parishes that our care for the needy is not charity but an essential part of our mission. It also reminds our society that the common good is an essential consideration in forming policies. That is in danger of being lost today when many voices call for extreme individualism and a "survival of the fittest" type of economy.

-- Then we hear that *there was no one in need among them*, for they cared for each other. We, as followers of Christ, are called to care for each other's needs, both bodily and spiritual.

-- I find it troubling that many people today who call for a so-called return to a Christian society are concerned with things like prayer in public schools or Nativity displays on public grounds. Should they not be just as, if not *more* concerned, with providing for the needs of the poor, the weak and those who are discriminated against?

-- In 2012, we cannot duplicate the structure of the early Christian community of Jerusalem, nor should we try. But we must continue to proclaim Jesus Christ. We must do this in our prayers and liturgies.

-- But we must also do this by our lack of envy and possessiveness, our care for each other, and our concern for the needs of the world around us. Those activities which put this into practice are crucial.

-- Our life as a Christian community...and as a parish here at St. Caspar's, will be judged on how willing we are to take up this challenge.