

04/14/13 3 Easter C

-- It was the day after my dad died. I'd gone home to help make funeral arrangements and had stayed overnight. The first thing I wanted to do that morning was to go out and take a run in the crisp morning air.

-- That was something familiar to me. When under stress, we return to the familiar. That is what the disciples did in our gospel. Peter and his companions had experienced Jesus' death, the empty tomb and his appearance to them. They needed something familiar to do, so they went fishing. It was the logical thing for them to do.

-- Even those very ordinary things, though, can be a means to feel God's presence. And so it was for them that morning. These weak men, who had cut and run under stress, would hear the Lord's call once again.

-- In this meal by the lake, they heard Jesus call them to minister in his name. Peter, in particular, was given the commission to take care of the people who would believe in Jesus, once Jesus had left this earth.

-- Along with the Last Supper and the commission to baptize in the name of the Trinity, this scripture passage is one basis for the Church's sacrament of Holy Orders.

-- It's clear that Jesus wanted the disciples to form a community of believers. He didn't give them a detailed blueprint, but he did give them a commission: *Feed my lambs...tend my sheep.*

-- Within a generation or two, a pattern emerged of a threefold ministry, of bishops, presbyters (priests) and deacons. We as Catholics believe this took place under the Holy Spirit's guidance.

-- The bishop is ordained as the overseer of the local Church. Today that means the diocese. We say he has the fullness of Holy Orders because he has not only sacramental powers but the power of governance.

-- He's not just a "middle manager" in a big corporation called the Catholic Church. He is the chief teacher and minister of the local Church entrusted to him. But he exercises his ministry in cooperation with his fellow bishops and especially the Bishop of Rome, the Pope.

-- The priest is ordained to celebrate the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation, for the people entrusted to him. As a pastor I'm called to serve this community of St. Caspar's with the gifts I have, and to look out for the welfare of our parish.

-- But I also have a call to be mindful of the needs of the Church on a larger level. I need to keep before our community the needs of the least among us, and the need to reach out in a missionary spirit to the world.

-- And I don't exercise my ministry as a "lone ranger." I'm called to help you use your gifts for our local parish and the community around us. I'm also expected to have the needs of the diocese and the world Church in my concerns and before my people.

-- The deacon is ordained particularly for service in the Church. Though deacons serve at the altar, baptize, occasionally preach, this flows from their call to be attuned to the needs of the community.

-- Like Peter, all of us called to Orders are earthen vessels. We are imperfect people, sinful as all human beings are. Yet, the Lord worked through him and he continues to work through those ordained to service in the Church today.

-- All of us should pray for those who share in the sacrament of Holy Orders. We need your prayers to conduct our ministry. We also need your support and, yes, on occasion, your constructive criticism.

-- We are also invited to pray that more men might respond to the call to special service in the Church through Holy Orders. This is critical for the life of the Church. We also need to encourage our young people to be open to this calling.

-- Peter was all too human. He denied Jesus three times, and then professed his faith three times. Yet God worked great things through him. May God continue to do great things through those called to the sacrament of Holy Orders.