

Homily: May 24, 2022

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We are nearing the Feast of the Ascension, yet our Easter celebration continues. Jesus prepares his disciples then and now by introducing his Risen self as an Advocate Spirit, who will help us in our faith life. In our busyness, we forget or maybe even feel unworthy to be a temple of that Holy Spirit. So we call upon our compassionate God, saying: "Lord, have mercy. . .

"It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. . ." The Advocate is the Risen Christ guiding and accompanying us into deeper and deeper faith. Jesus was inviting the disciples to understand him in a new way, in a wider, powerful and all-present way. He would and is present now as the risen Christ present in the hearts of all people.

One grand example is that fantastic resurrection story we heard as a first reading today! Here is the Risen Christ truly at work. He was and is capable of transforming a suicidal prisoner guard to a baptized hospitable nurse and a rejoicing disciple of Jesus, model of faith leading others to faith. He must have put himself in danger as the one releasing Paul and Silas, who were jailed by the city magistrates.

Of course the Risen Christ had already turned Christian killer and prisoner, Saul, into the fantastic and tireless apostle Paul. Later, the Risen Christ called out to young and proud Augustine, who eventually became the famous Bishop Augustine of Hippo. Due to his great community spirit, he became the mentor of religious community life through a short community rule he composed, which many Orders, including us Crosiers follow.

In the late 1970's, the Risen Christ turned a former shy seminary rector and somewhat stiff young bishop in Central America into a fearless fighter for the rights of poor farmers. The Spirit of the Risen Christ helped Bishop Oscar Romero to the point of openly inviting the Catholic leaders of a very oppressive and brutal government to stop the torture and killings. He believed that if and when he might be martyred, 1000s of other courageous Catholics would rise to fight for

the rights of the poor. (Those government leaders hired the sharp-shooter who shot Bishop Romero at the altar of a convent during mass).

The Risen Christ works today—at this very moment--changing thousands of our addicted sisters and brothers into sober, wonderful and valuable people through 12 Step groups.

You and I must ask ourselves, “Are we open to the Resurrected Christ transforming and changing us? What kind of transformation do you and I await from the Holy Spirit? Let us ponder those questions for a moment.