

Homily: April 5, 2024

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We continue our Octave of Easter Celebration, singing the hymn of the angels as we renew our baptismal promises in the sprinkling ritual.

In the first reading we heard, “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are saved.” Or in Philippians 2:10, “In the name of Jesus, every knee should bend.”

I invite us to understand these sayings in a fuller sense. According to the Bible, a name is more than simply a title identification. A name is intimately connected with the essence or essential aspect of a person. The name “Jesus” was the calling name for our Nazarene Lord, and the name “Jesus” also points to his essence as the incarnation of love and his total obedience to the God of love.

St. Theresa of Avila said the key question about entering heaven is, “Did you love?” How many religious actions one performed was not the key issue, but rather, “Did you love?” Jesus had the same perspective when he described who the sheep on his right would be in the final judgment. They would have to answer questions like: Did you give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, or did you help the sick, or visit a prisoner, etc.? These acts of love are essential and much more important than what religion you belong to. That’s why Jesus frowned upon people who thought they would attain salvation simply by saying, “Lord, Lord.” Rather, the people who consciously choose to be merciful, compassionate, and truly loving would enter the kingdom of God. St. John also reminds us that we who say we love God must simultaneously love our neighbor.

This past Wednesday evening, Confreres Huber, Rio, and I were guests of a Turkish Muslim family who invited us for their *Iftar* meal. This meal happens every evening after sunset during the thirty-day Muslim Ramadan period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, similar to our Lenten time. They also invited another Muslim family from Turkmenistan and an Anglo couple from Scottsdale. Clearly, this family and many other Muslim families purposely go beyond their normal inviting habits to create community and extend special hospitality to carry out the will of Allah, the God of mercy and compassion. Vatican II documents tell us that such intentional loving activity is salvational for our Muslim sisters and brothers, and people of other religions with loving values, too.

The apostles depicted in today’s Gospel of the Large Catch of Fish went the extra step, too. After not catching any fish all night, they willingly followed the advice of the resurrected Christ and netted 153 large fish. Such an abundance of fish symbolized the results possible

whenever we intentionally follow Jesus. He is all about extending love beyond normal expectations so that love grows and becomes mutual, as indicated by Jesus and the apostles contributing morning breakfast food on the beach of Lake Galilee.

When we follow the resurrected Jesus, our faith deepens, new or old relationships are strengthened and widened, and food is shared across new boundaries. Salvation is in the making for explicit Christian, Muslim, and other religious lovers, who thereby continue to build the kingdom of God.

As the Psalmist said, "The Lord is God, and he has given us light." ALLELUIA!