

Homily: May 6, 2024

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We are coming toward the end of our Easter Season. Next Sunday we celebrate the ascension and the following Sunday, Pentecost. Jesus, in the Gospel, is beginning to prepare his disciples and us for the time we depend on his Holy Spirit and his word. Our attempts to depend on the Holy Spirit and Word are limited. So we acknowledge God's boundless compassion. Lord, have mercy!

We heard Jesus promise a helper, the Holy Spirit, to testify about him and truth. Then comes Jesus' call—"And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning." Jesus warned his disciples that this testimony might lead to their death due to people protesting their testimony.

These words of Jesus form the backdrop for the early-church scene described in the first reading from Acts. Paul and Barnabas use a Sabbath-Saturday morning to find a quiet place along the river to pray. They discover a group of women already gathered there.

Rather than going further down the river bank to be by themselves, they join this group of women. My hunch is that this was a rather bold move by Paul and Barnabas in an Asian setting. They chose this moment to talk about Jesus, and suddenly Lydia, the merchant of purple cloth, and her household are baptized. Moreover, she makes a rather bold move, too, in that cultural setting. She invites them to stay at her home, and rather insistently so. Paul said, "She prevailed on us."

Paul, Barnabas, and Lydia took bold and extraordinary steps to evangelize and accept evangelization. This was evidence of the movement of the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised.

That same Holy Spirit is prodding us on, too. Pope Francis reminded us several years ago in his book, *The Joy of the Gospel*, that we must be missionary evangelizers.

All this prompts us to ask ourselves, "When have I and when do I usually testify to Jesus?" Am I brave, bold, and creative like Paul, Barnabas, and Lydia in trying to get the Good News about Jesus into me, first of all, and then to others?"

Let's pause for a moment and recall an occasion when we testified to others about Jesus, our Lord and brother totally dedicated to loving.

A few examples that came to my mind from my background and that of our community here at Crosier Village.

- Hanging a poster of Jesus walking hand-in-hand with a Jewish boy and Palestinian girl.
- Wearing the Crosier cross or Crosier habit which prompted questions and explanatory response.
- Being a multicultural Crosier & lay Christian group here at Crosier Village and nurturing good relationships.
- sponsoring/participating in interfaith dialogue events.
- Befriending and helping homeless individuals/families.

--ultimately, every time we act, speak, and think in a loving way about/toward others.