

## Third Sunday of Easter

In her book *Dead Man Walking*, Sister Helen Prejean tells about her visits to prisoners on death row. She also visited the parents of those prisoners to comfort them. She later learned that the parents of the victims were angry at her for not visiting them. "We're Catholic too," they said. Their children went out on a date one night and were murdered. As both young people were going out the door that evening, their parents were correcting them. They told Sr. Helen, "If we had known that we were speaking our final words to our child, we would have told them we loved them." Instead, their last words to their children were, "Fix your blouse." "Comb your hair. Shut the door." And with that, their kids were gone. We all love the people in our families, but we do not always say the words, "I love you." These words state the truth, and they keep us focused. We never know which words we say to the ones we love will be the last words they ever hear.

Many corporations post a mission statement. Here at St. Anthony's we recently revised ours. It hangs by the front door of the church and appears each week on the cover of our bulletin: "The people of St. Anthony Catholic Church praise God for the families and neighbors who nourished our faith. We welcome the variety of people who live within our neighborhood or support it from outside. We strive to follow God's commands, proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, challenge indifference, and help those in need." Those words keep us focused.

Throughout the Catholic Church we repeat our core beliefs at mass every Sunday in the creed. These keep us focused on our faith. During Lent and Easter, the Church invites us to recite the Apostles Creed. Tradition holds that the apostles themselves composed this creed, each of them contributing a line. We use it to begin the rosary. When catechumens prepare for baptism, we present the creed to them. We proclaim it aloud; they hear it from our lips and hearts. Later, on the day of their baptism, they recite the creed back to us, to show that they know it and are prepared to live by it. In the moments before they are baptized, they are asked, "Do you believe in God the Father? And in Jesus Christ? And in the Holy Spirit?" They answer, "I do," each time. After their baptism they join us every Sunday, reciting the words of the creed to keep them focused on their faith.

Today's first reading tells events that took place on the first Pentecost Sunday. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, and Peter spoke to the crowds gathered in Jerusalem. No matter what language his listeners spoke, they all understood his message: "Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs.... [You killed him.] But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death." Peter explained that the apostles were witnesses to the risen Jesus, and that his resurrection was foretold by David in Psalm 16, which we used today for our responsorial. This reading contains the apostles' first proclamation of a creed. It states in a few lines what we believe and why. It keeps us focused. We may not think much of it, but when we recite the creed at mass each week, we ensure that its words will be among the last we ever speak to God. Not, "Give me this," or "Give me that," but "I believe."

**SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017**