

## 5th Sunday of Easter

**This bicycle metaphor is one my parents repeated often: If you fall off a bike, get up and try again. Mistakes are part of life. When you make one, that does not excuse you from trying again. You have a mission. We do not condone sinful behavior. We have especially low tolerance for lies and crimes in public figures. But you are more than your mistakes. You are holy.**

**Imagine St. Paul in the days after his conversion. He recognized his past failures and joined the company of Christians. But the disciples could only recall how he persecuted their friends and approved the murder of Stephen. Today's first reading reports their understandable distrust. Barnabas had to convince the disciples that Paul had indeed become a strong ally in the work of the gospel.**

**Today's responsorial has us sing a verse of Psalm 22 that sounds like St. Paul in the days after his conversion: "I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people." Paul wanted to praise God now with other Christians. Psalm 22 is the same one that opens with the words Jesus prayed on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" But at the end those chilling words are set aside with this trust in God: "The poor shall eat and shall have their fill.... All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord.... my soul shall live for him, my descendants serve him." In one prayer the psalmist has turned around from thinking that God had made a mistake to realizing that God is holy.**

**Pope Francis just released an Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World. Many call it a spiritual masterpiece. The pope says we are all called into mission. If we focus on faults, we despair. It's like falling off that bicycle. We get back up for the greater task ahead. As with St. Paul, God calls each of us, in spite of our mistakes, to a life of holiness. Here are paragraphs 22-24 of *Gaudete et Exsultate*, "Rejoice and Be Glad," by Pope Francis:**

**"To recognize the word that the Lord wishes to speak to us through one of his saints, we do not need to get caught up in details, for there we might also encounter mistakes and failures. Not everything a saint says is completely faithful to the Gospel; not everything he or she does is authentic or perfect. What we need to contemplate is the totality of their life, their entire journey of growth in holiness, the reflection of Jesus Christ that emerges when we grasp their overall meaning as a person.**

**"This is a powerful summons to all of us. You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world.**

**"May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit, so that this can happen, lest you fail in your precious mission. The Lord will bring it to fulfillment despite your mistakes and missteps, provided that you do not abandon the path of love but remain ever open to his supernatural grace, which purifies and enlightens."**

Sunday, April 29, 2018