

## 6th Sunday of Easter

In just a couple of weeks Bishop Johnston will ordain three new priests for our diocese here in the cathedral. Many of us more seasoned priests set aside the time to concelebrate that mass and to welcome the newcomers into our presbyterate. Priests of my generation understand that priests of a new generation will think differently about church than we do. We share all the core values, but we implement them in different ways, as you would expect in any intergenerational system like your family. When the younger generation starts to express values differently, the older generation takes notice. When someone marries into the family, you want to rejoice, but part of you may wonder, “Just who is this new person? What does this wedding mean for the future of our family? Will we all see the world the same way?” Which sometimes means, “Will this new person see the world the way I see the world?”

When Peter the apostle visited the household of Cornelius the Gentile, they both suddenly realized that God was opening the message of Christ to both Jew and Gentile. This gladdened whole groups of people beyond these two individuals, but it also presented reasons for concern. Each group wondered, “If we widen our circle, what changes does that imply from the way we lived in the past?”

Psalm 98 follows up today’s first reading with a similar theme. The psalms of course were written long before Christ; Jesus sometimes quoted them. The occasion for this psalm appears to be some victory that the Jews had won over Gentile nations; we don’t know what. But the psalm does not rejoice that the opponents lost. It rejoices that everyone now sees God the same way. It goes, “All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” It calls on all the earth to shout to the Lord - Israel’s God - and sing praise. Ancient Israel could not have foreseen how this psalm would resonate after Christ, when Christianity spread throughout the nations, and all the earth shouted praise to God’s faithfulness. Surprisingly, faithfulness does not mean doing things the old way, in which God was the personal God of Israel alone. Rather, God showed faithfulness to Israel by letting others into the fold. This changed the world’s perspective on who God is, and whose God is.

Widening the circle was an evolution that the first Christians had to face - as do other groups, whether it’s the priests of a diocese or the members of your family. Sometimes the older generation feels so threatened by the actions of the younger generation, that older folks try to block what younger ones do. Sometimes, though, God is actually speaking through the youth. Sometimes younger people have a broader vision that deserves encouragement, not suppression. This encouragement is one of the greatest gifts that an older generation can offer the young. It shows that even well seasoned people can mature.

Almost every organization wants new members, but when we get them, we better be open to what they bring. As Psalm 98 had us sing today, “The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power” - not our saving power. The Lord has not revealed how wonderful we are, but how wonderful he is. When we all do his work, the values between generations will cohere and spread.

Sunday, May 6, 2018