

I told Fr. Schuster last night I was going to talk about losses today. He said, "Losses?" I said, "Yes. Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Los Angeles."

No. I'm struck by the losses the Apostles suffered on Good Friday and Ascension Thursday. Not only did they lose Jesus, but they also lost Judas. Death struck twice for this tight-knit group of friends. The death of Jesus became an event for exaltation, but the death of Judas must have been a source of embarrassment. Whenever a group loses a member they need to count their losses and start again.

The death of Judas so hurt the Eleven Apostles that they replaced him almost immediately. In fact it was about this time, according to the Acts of the Apostles, it was during the nine days between Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday that they decided to replace Judas.

I'm sure Judas had embarrassed them. The Twelve had grown enormously in stature. But Judas, one of them, stole their money, betrayed their master, collected silver for turning him over, and killed himself in the end.

Groups suffer when one member embarrasses them. One of the Kennedys is charged with rape. England's Royal Family is exposed in every tabloid. Bishops and priests are charged with impropriety. It's embarrassing when that happens.

And if you're a typical family ~~this has happened to you~~ *you've suffered losses* too. ~~How many of us feel we are~~ forever alien to one family member of another. Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, and other family celebrations give us occasion to put embarrassments aside and thank God for what family blessings have come our way.

This is what the Apostles struggle with after the Ascension. How can we put our embarrassment aside and go on standing tall? They decide to replace Judas, and they have two strong candidates: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. They both qualify—they were both with Jesus from his baptism to his death. Either one would do. What's interesting is how they decide which one to choose. They throw dice. Essentially what they say is, "We cannot rely on human judgment alone. We'll ask the Spirit to speak to us through dice." Matthias is chosen and we never hear of Joseph Barsabbas again. Of course, we never hear of Matthias again either, but what happened was the Twelve got over their embarrassment and regained their stature.

Whenever we suffer embarrassment, it's important to admit the hurt and to feel the loss. To overcome embarrassment we turn to the Spirit for help and build up again, knowing that even while we feel loss, we can also feel whole.