

This is the fourth week of our series called Vision part 2.

We started this series on Easter Sunday by stating that a vision is a picture of what could be and should be, but doesn't exist...yet. It's a picture of a preferred or better future.

The first disciples witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and that gave them a whole new vision for their lives. Since He conquered death, they came to believe in a power that could accomplish so much more than any of them could ever imagine.

They were now able to look beyond their fears and failures, and hurts and hang-ups, to a vision far bigger than themselves.

And like the early church, we believe that God has given our parish a vision for the future, and it's a big one, it's a bold one.

The next step in bringing about that vision is for us to become growing disciples who are growing disciples.

Over the course of this Easter season, we've been taking a look at the vision of what our parish can be.

We've come a long way in that vision. We are more welcoming, we are more supportive of each other, we are a more caring community.

We are discovering new ways to make this faith community a place where our parishioners and visitors can grow in their faith and in their understanding of what it means to be a disciple.

We are working hard to provide an attractive place to connect people in our community to Christ.

But we are not there yet, not completely. There is still much work to be done. The good news is, we will get there.

And so, we need your participation in this parish. We need your gifts to build up our community so that we can become stronger disciples who are growing in their faith. This will enable us to then go out and share this faith gift with others.

God's vision for our parish is to serve others; to bring people to Christ; to care for each other in mercy and love. We want you to share in the joy that serving others brings. We want you to know the thrill of being a part of this vision.

Last week, Fr. Gary talked about what happened to Peter and John on their way to the temple. A disabled man stops them and begs them for money.

Instead, Peter says to him:

6 ... in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

Immediately, the man gets up and proceeds to do just that. This miracle demonstrates the power of Jesus crucified and risen from the dead.

This week we find Peter again defending his actions to the Elders in the temple, some of whom were opposed to Jesus.

Peter and John are brought before the Elders and the Scribes who want to know by what power they healed this man.

So Peter tells them:

⁸ ...“*let it be known that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.*”

Peter concludes:

¹² *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.*”

Peter is saying that Jesus is THE plan, God's plan, to save humanity in its brokenness. Christ is the plan. He's plan “A” and there is no plan “B”.

That's why what we do here matters so much. We have a mission that is the most important mission in the world, to bring others to Christ by our words and our actions.

Peter healed that crippled man, not because he was lucky or strong or holy, but because he was rooted in the community of faith that lived in relationship with each other, relying on the power of Christ and His continued presence among them.

Same for us. Our ability to be a force for good in the world comes because we are gathered together, in prayer, in relationship, in a common mission and in the Eucharist that we receive each time we gather. The power of Christ is literally inside of us!

A protestant friend of ours came to this parish as a visitor, stayed, and became a Catholic because of how he was welcomed; because of the relationships that he built with other parishioners.

I stand here today not because of my incredible faith or holiness, not because of my devout prayer life. I'm here today because of the time I spent worshipping with others together in community over the years.

I am able to do what I do today because I'm a product of this parish family and God's immeasurable grace through the Eucharist!

There are those who don't feel the need to belong to a church and that's their choice.

But if they don't belong to a faith community, where do they find lasting support when a loved one dies, or when they get sick? How do they find support from others when their faith is tested? How do they seek advice from like-minded people when they are weighed down by life's challenges?

This faith community is where we find support. Here is where we find inspiration through the faith and love of others.

It is so important for us to be here each week and I think it's important for us to encourage others to be here as well.

Look at us gathered here today: parents, single people, brothers and sisters, grand parents, aunts and uncles, students, *your children receiving first communion*.

Just think of the impact we all have on each other, not just because of who we are but because we are here today! That impact is felt because we are gathered as a community.

This vision campaign is about reflecting on our mission as a parish and as individuals and how we can participate to make this mission happen.

And so next week, we're going to celebrate the investment of our time and talents with a re-commitment to this vision.

Here's what I'd like you to do in the week ahead. I invite you to take home a bulletin with our Vision insert and a **commitment card**. Read the insert and then take a careful look at the commitment card.

Then, during the week, pray about what ministry you can commit to in helping to build up our parish community.

And then, fill out the commitment card with something you'd like to do, and bring it back next Sunday. Talk about this as a family and talk about what it means to live our lives as disciples of Christ.

As I mentioned two weeks ago:

For some of you, the commitment you made last year is all you can do at this time. And that's fine, we are grateful for your sacrifice.

For others, you are going to think, "*I can commit more.*" You have a desire to do more and you're in a position to do just that. So you will look at expanding your involvement in the parish. Thank you!

For a third group, you may not have been here last year or you may be new to the parish. You may have never thought about serving in the church before.

Maybe the traditional ministries of reading, ushering or greeting don't appeal to you.

Maybe you don't see where your talents can be used. Whatever you do, whatever your skills, know that they can be used to serve the church in some way.

When you fill out your commitment card, if you don't see something that suits you.... then write in the skills you have to offer and we'll see where your gifts can be used.

Just by taking that first step, God will find important things you can do to help grow His church.

Remember,

We don't have to do this. We get to do this.

We don't have to contribute. We get to contribute.

We don't have to be a part of it. We get to be a part of it,