“Always Be Ready”

Sixth Sunday of Easter, Cycle A

I) “I’m a frayed knot”

A) An amazing thing happened in downtown Frederick

B) Enjoying a cup of coffee in a coffee shop when the door burst open

C) In walked a piece of rope! The rope jumped up to the barista, and said, “I’ll have a latte.”

The barista replied, “I’m sorry. We have an ordinance in Frederick. We can serve food and drink to people only. We don’t serve drinks to ropes here. I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

D) So the rope went outside, rolled on the sidewalk, threw himself up against the curb until his neat ends were all loose and frayed, threw himself under a car, and then asked someone to tie him up in a knot.

E) The rope then walked back into the coffee shop, went to the barista, and said, “I’ll have a lotte.”

F) The barista said, “Aren’t you that rope that was in here a minute ago?”

G) And the rope said, “. . . No, I’m a frayed knot.”

II) Modern Challenge to Integrity

A) The rope’s story illustrates a particularly modern challenge

B) The rope was willing to change everything about itself to fit it and get what it wanted

C) Similarly, our modern culture often expects us as disciples to act one way in private, and another at school, at work, government service, or in public

1 A pun on the English idiomatic expression, “I’m afraid not . . .”.
D) Our culture often holds it is fine to worship in private, but we are to keep our religious beliefs, faith, and teachings to ourselves in public.

E) It would be easy to be like the rope, to be two different people, to change ourselves to fit into the world, and get what we want.

III) Abundant Life: A Gift to be Shared
A) But as disciples, we rejoice in the gift of Abundant Life freely given, and meant to be shared
B) The world expects us to keep our faith a private matter, hidden under a bushel basket
C) We, however, out of a Love of God and those made in His image, are compelled to share the Good News!
D) To share the gift of Abundant Life to one and all!
E) We are not to follow the example of the rope, changing ourselves to fit in
F) As we hear in today’s reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul
G) We are called to “always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for (our) hope.”

IV) How do we do that in a culture that expects us to become “frayed knots,” keeping our faith a private matter?

V) Some families of Christian Spirituality openly recruit, give their testimony, go door to door.

VI) Catholic Tradition
A) Actions – Corporal Works of Mercy
1) As a Church, we have organized entire religious orders around the Corporal Works
2) Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament
3) As disciples, we are called to act in the world
4) The hope, “They will know we are Christians by our Love.”

B) Places – Churches
1) Parishioner reports she traveled to Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru
2) With young professionals that were either agnostic, atheist, or openly antagonistic of the Catholic Church
3) Yet they wanted to visit the historic Churches
4) Knowing our parishioner to be Catholic, they asked many questions about the Churches!
5) Church as evangelization! Consider a capital campaign pledge!

C) Words –
1) Whether Actions or Sacred Space, when the question is asked, it requires the words of a disciple.
2) “Always be ready to give an explanation . . . for a reason for your hope.”

VII) Offering an explanation for the reason for our hope may seem like a tricky, uncomfortable, or confrontational task

A) Here’s four pointers from our parish staff to guide you; share with one another your ideas and suggestions:

1) First, see yourself as an evangelist inviting others to the Abundant Life
(a) Not so much “defending” the faith in argument, as that’s confrontational.
(b) Peter says we are to give our explanation with gentleness and reverence

2) **Second**, if someone is challenging you and being critical of the Catholic faith, teachings, traditions, or failings, listen to them and acknowledge truth.
   (a) **However**, respond with your personal explanation of what the Church does *right*, why you belong, and what our parish does *right*.

3) **Third**, someone challenges you with, “How can you believe in . . . . (God, Mary without sin, Jesus as God and man)
   (a) Ask the person what they understand, for example, God to be
   (b) Most of the time you’ll be able to say, “Well, I wouldn’t believe in that either!
   (c) Then give them your definition of God.

4) **Fourth**, when you sense the time is right, offer them a forty day guarantee
   (a) Encourage them to participate with you in our parish for 40 Days
   (b) At the end of 40 Days, they must ask themselves if we’re simply another volunteer organization
   (c) Or if there was something special, some other unexplainable presence here.
   (d) Know someone? Pentecost Sunday a great time to invite them to join us, and stay for breakfast
   (a) Remind them to wear red!
(e) Just think, if each disciple in the course of their lifelong journey brought just one more person to the faith, the Church would double.

VIII) Sharing an explanation for the reason for our hope may seem like a tricky, uncomfortable, or confrontational task
A) Easy to give into the temptation of becoming an afraid, frayed knot
B) Our Lord knows this, and speaks to us in today’s Gospel from John
C) When an opportunity arises for us to give an explanation for the reason for our hope
D) The Lord will not leave us orphans, but will come to us and be with us
E) And Jesus will ask Our Father to send the Another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, to guide and be with us always.
F) Christ who died for us, and rose to share His Abundant Life with us, will certainly be with us when we do the same