

Please see how God is calling us forward to accomplish His purposes and ways. Using the paradigm of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection, I have laid out what may be seen as some our own Passion, Death and Resurrection as a parish. The first installment is below. Each week I will forward you additional installments through Constant Contact. Please follow our story of Resurrection and New Life!

In the Love and Will of our Resurrected Lord, Fr. Bernie+

## FROM THE PASSION AND CROSS TO THE RESURRECTION: JOINING GOD IN HIS WORK OF SALVATION AROUND US

In the coming weeks, I will be providing you with weekly installments of how God is inviting us to join Him in His work. It is a work we have been prayerfully discerning for years. It is, however, a "New Thing" which requires a certain change from that which is familiar to us. What we are endeavoring to accomplish is God's purposes for Christ's kingdom on earth. When we spiritually begin with this knowledge then the story of Resurrection for St. Martin becomes the more understandable.

I have laid out our discernment of God's purpose for our parish within the scriptural context of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. These theological themes of Salvation are our themes about being Christ's Church in this place at this time.

Please carefully read this article. Your Vestry, parish leaders, clergy and I are obligated to be faithful to our discernment of God's call as presented here.

Fr. Bernie+

### **The Challenge of the Passion and Death**

*On the night of Jesus' betrayal he ate supper with his friends. He knew what soon would await him. His heart was deeply diminished. In the Garden he asked the Father to take this cup from him. "Your will, Father, be done." "It is my will. I love you." Jesus was soon arrested, denied by his closest friends, beaten, humiliated and condemned to die. "Your will, Father, be done." "It is my will. I love you." He was near death when he was nailed to a cross and there naked before the world passing him by. "Your will, Father, be done. Father?" At the last he felt abandoned. He gave up his Spirit."*

Jesus gave his very all: his will and his body. He did this for Love of the Father and the Salvation of all things created. In a loving faith He held onto nothing other than the Father's purposes: obedient unto death. "Your will, Father, be done."

For us to grow in the purposes of God we need to let go of those things which hold us back from that which God requires, including the familiar. As we release our control to God's we become transformed into the newness of life to which He is calling us. Unless we are willing to do this then God can do no good work through us. God's heart of Love is calling our hearts. In this relationship God will teach us when and how to accomplish His work.

The challenge for St. Martin is to hear God's voice in order to join Him where He is working right now within our faith community and our Community of Pompano Beach. Your parish leaders have been prayerfully discerning God's call. Through dialogue, research and study, due diligence and hearts faithfully listening to God's voice we are committed to discern the path upon which God is calling us.

Here is a paradigm of St. Martin's story based on the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. The following are what describe our passion and potential death.

### **Invigoration of Membership**

*Our average weekly attendance has declined steadily since 2000 except for a spike in 2005 where we recorded an attendance of 175. In 2013 and 2014 our AWA has held at 140.*

*We no longer have a Sunday School or nursery to teach children about Jesus Christ and nurture them into the Church. Rarely do we have children attend our Sunday Services.*

*Our Building Bridges Preschool closed her doors December of 2014 as the local community was not supporting it with new children.*

*Our baptismal high in 2009 was 18 compared to 2014-15 which is 0. Our recorded high for Confirmation was 9 in 2009 compared to 0 in 2014-15.*

*Our pledging units declined from 99 in 2009 to 72 in 2013.*

These numbers, although not presently critical, show to me that we need to better hear the voice of God, and better determine where God is calling us, so that we may join Him. As a result, to better feed His people. If we better feed God's people, they will come.

### **The Aging Facilities**

The majority of the monies we receive through pledges, plate, interest from our endowment and other fund raising accomplished by our hardworking parishioners goes to pay the diocesan assessment, salaries, insurances and the maintenance of our aging facilities. We struggle from month to month to meet the financial requirements of "Making ends meet". Because the annual monetary expenditure is greater than the annual income, we struggle to maintain our current ministry. Our ministry outreach is minimal due to our lack of financial resources and membership. The projected maintenance and repair of our aging buildings will require an additional source of funding. The projects are:

- A kitchen fire suppression unit for our parish hall stove (required by fire department code): \$3,500-\$13,800.
- A fire alarm system in the church building (required by fire department code): \$24,988.
- Repair of the seawall: \$106,000.
- Other needed repairs without estimates: Church building electrical rewiring - ADA renovations throughout facilities, especially entrances and bathrooms - Church sound system - Replacement of carpet in the church and chapel - Replacement of office and sacristy exterior windows - Exterior door replacements - Refurbishing of Rector's office wall which has mold - Refurbishing of office bathrooms - Various roof repairs - Completion of north parking lot fence project

All these repairs and renovation projects are necessary. However, we are currently unable to address them. These aging facility estimates coupled with the need and ability to invigorate our membership seems daunting. And, your parish leadership and I believe that if we do not discern God's purposes and ways, we will continue to realize an overall decline.

This is our paradigm of the Passion Narrative. It appears at first glance to be at best challenging and at worst deadly. Yet, in the face of Jesus' passion God had a purpose. If there was no cross there could be no Resurrection and Salvation.

What could God's purpose be for us in the face of such disheartening realities? Remember, we are Christ's church. Christ wants us to be his Body in the world. He calls us and empowers us to success. We are His resurrection community. We will live into the New Life God is calling us to share as we come to know His Love and Purposes for us.

Therefore, I believe that all before us can be used as a means of God's grace. It truly invites us to open our hearts, ears and eyes and seek God's will. Many St. Martinites see that God is powerfully revealing His will and want to accomplish it.

*"Your will, Father, be done."*