

Homily for Sunday, April 6, 2008

This past week the priests of the archdiocese spent most of the week gathered together with our archbishop. I had thought that part of what we would do would be to finalize the assignments for the coming year, particularly who would be our new parochial vicar. But the archbishop said that they had the roster all prepared until two priests fell desperately ill, and so they'd have to go back to the drawing board.

One of those priests who have fallen ill is my good and dear friend Father Malachy McBride who served with me at Queen of Peace and who traveled with me to Spain, Italy and the Holy Land just before I was transferred to SHJ. He preached at my 25th anniversary as a priest 9 years ago; and he has asked me to preach at his funeral.

I could go on and on about this man who served as a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 30 years and who was stoned with rocks by a group of invaders who had entered the missionary compound to rape the nuns and nurses who lived in the compound. He went to protect them and was attacked so viciously that his right eye was destroyed along with the part of the skull around the eye. As St. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ." Though he was nearly fatally wounded, he did protect the nuns and nurses. And within a few short years every one of his attackers died a violent death.

Oh, I could go on and on about this great friend of mine, but I want to focus on the quality of our conversations over the years because it was the same quality as that of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

As we traveled through the years we could talk about what happened in our prayer life. We could talk about mystical experiences, we could talk about what we heard from the Lord, we could talk about the darkness of not hearing from the Lord. And he would often say, quoting St. John of the Cross, "I die because I do not die." That meant that he loved the Lord so much that he was dying inside because of yearning for that ultimate union with the Lord that we call heaven.

We could talk about our sufferings but never in a way that left us depressed, but rather in a way that was . . . well, like the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus. As we would talk about these most significant things we would often sense the presence of the Lord, so that many of these conversations could be described in the same words, "**Were not our hearts burning within us as He, the Lord, would be in our conversations?**"

My dear brothers and sisters, I have become convinced that the reason why some of our loved ones leave the Church or absent themselves from the Eucharist, is that no one had talked to them in a way that could be described as: "**Were not our hearts burning within us as He, the Lord, would be in our conversations?**"

How often do we talk with our closest and dearest ones about what goes on in our prayer life. I know you pray. You tell me about it in confession and in other times when you and I visit. But I don't think there is much conversation within families about what the Lord is now doing with me, or what I'm hearing from the Lord in my prayer, or how nothing seems to happen in my prayer time, but afterwards I find something happening in my life that I know is from the Lord.

When we can have these kinds of conversations with people who mean something to us, then when we gather for the Eucharist more and more of us will recognize Him in the breaking of the bread.

Sharing what goes on in our prayer life is a sharing of intimacy that most people do not want to open themselves up to. Such vulnerability is risky, but we must set aside our fears of being ridiculed for our conversations with God, especially with those who matter most to us. Our lack of sharing on this level is what causes our younger ones to be more evangelized by our secular culture than be evangelized by the Gospel. **We must put aside our sense of such privacy about spiritual matters that our loved ones have no clue that we are as close to the Lord as we are. Be brave! And share what the Risen Lord is doing with you!**