

Intro

Good afternoon my brothers and sisters in Christ. Today the theme of my homily is:

Jesus heals divisions

All of us face challenges in our lives that require us to make a choice, a direction to go. Many times the decision we make separates us from others?

What rewards will this decision bring?

What are the risks?

It was Feb 2, 1943 and the USAT Dorchester was a part of a convoy with three coast guard cutters in escort. There were 902 soldiers, sailors and civilians on board. The ship was en-route from Newfoundland to an American base in Greenland. At 12:55 am, U-223 launched three torpedoes at the Dorchester. One found its mark striking her well below the water line and knocking out power. In less than 20 minutes, Dorchester slipped beneath the surface taking 672 men with her. There were **four army Chaplains** among the dead.

- Lt. George Fox, Methodist ;
- Lt. Alexander Goode, Jewish;
- Lt. John Washington, Roman Catholic;
- Lt. Clark Poling, Dutch Reformed.

Those four chaplains chose one side – **they chose to separate themselves from the survivors**, they chose to serve the Lord

In those short 20 minutes, they opened a locker on the main deck and after giving away all the available life jackets, **then they gave away their own.**

Survivors said their prayers for the dying and their encouragement gave hope in this dark icy hell. In the end, they locked arms together and were heard praying together from the witness accounts from the lifeboats.

Body

In the gospel today from Luke, we hear Jesus ask his disciples a question and then give them the answer.

Do you think that I have come to establish peace on earth?

NO, I tell you but rather division.

Haven't we always heard that we are united in the body of Christ? In 1 Cor 12, St Paul talks about the body of Christ synonymous with the parts of the body. Christ is the head of the body, the church, and all the parts of the body work **in harmony and mutual support** for each other.

Yes, we are united when we 'put on Christ' and willingly choose to serve each other in compassion and love. This is our parish motto, walking united serving God's people.

So why is Jesus speaking of division? And that he will cause division?

Following Christ will cause division, but **Jesus heals divisions**

Jesus himself experienced this division In (Matt 13:55) . Jesus was in his hometown, taught in the synagogue with his neighbors that he knew from childhood. Here is what they said:

"Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds?

Is he not the carpenter's son?

Is not his mother named Mary

So why were the people in Jesus' home synagogue divided?

When you choose to follow the Lord, to follow Jesus, be prepared to experience division.

Look at the first reading from the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah is called by some scholars the **weeping prophet**, it was not because he was depressed and self-absorbed. Jeremiah loved the Lord and he loved his people. When he saw his people pulling away from their source of life, their God, he could not be silent. He was constantly calling the people (who did not want to change) back to the Lord. Today's scripture is a sample of how the leadership felt about this **'pest'** called Jeremiah.

When you choose the Lord, be prepared to experience division, but Jesus heals divisions

Back again to the gospel. So Jesus tells the disciples that he has come to set the earth on fire and there was a baptism that which he must be baptized. In Luke 3:16, John the Baptist stated, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. One interpretation is this fire will purify souls (taking our sins away) and the "fire" baptism that Jesus will go through is the cross itself.

This purification by the fire of the cross – is our salvation – Jesus takes away sin that divides us from heaven

This new life is eternity that begins today. To follow Jesus will mean for us to separate us from our old way of life and follow Him. In the letter to the Hebrews, the author tells us "that we to persevere in running this race (life) you may not grow weary and lose heart".

This is not easy, but the reward is great!

Closing

Today the Catholic Church is facing two divisions. One division is external and one is internal. The external division is to be expected. We as a church have held our positions on the definition of family, the protection of all life from conception to natural death and our outreach to the immigrants. In many ways our positions, have set us against American society.

As a faith community, we are viewed by a segment of American society as worshipping an ancient myth (out of touch with today) and is not scientifically based. We also have the “nones” not to be confused with nuns, basically this is a group of ‘Christians’ that when recent polls ask, what your religious affiliation is, the answer is none. The ‘nones’ have fallen away from our faith in general because they do not see the relevancy of faith in God in their own lives . Technology is rapidly changing our lives. Many people view technology as a way to control more of our lives and make our lives more enjoyable and fulfilling.

We seem to be at the other end of the spectrum with stressing self-control, delayed gratification and acceptance of suffering as a way to grow character and faith.

The internal division within our own Church is evident. It has been one year since the PA Attorney general report broke news and the scandal with former Cardinal McCarrick. Many states have ongoing investigations as well; so this topic will continue follow our church.

My purpose here in not to debate the issue, but to point to the solution to the issue of division

The solution is Jesus

Jesus calls us to follow him in a life of self-control and acceptance of suffering as a way to grow in holiness, character and faith.

I highly recommend you get a copy of the book that Bishop Barron wrote “letter to a Suffering Church”. Fr John has made this book available to us for free, just pick one up in the gathering area.

I agree with Bishop Barron, Do not leave the church, **but stay and fight for her**. Fight for her as you would fight for your marriage, for your parents, for your children, for your grandchildren.

Fight by:

- Living a life of prayer.
- Be the servant with compassion and love.
- Do not be ashamed to pronounce your love of God in the public forum,
- Help those on the margins (the unplanned pregnancy, the immigrant) and those who think and act and believe differently than us.
- Be ready to be **“looked on as different”**
- Be ready to suffer and **do not expect** the successful conclusion in your lifetime
- Live in the present but **with the goal of living in eternity**

Lastly – receive the Eucharist as often as you can ... last week I actually **‘heard’** Fr Vincent as he prayed the Eucharistic Prayer II for reconciliation, it touched me in a new way ... here is the that portion of Eucharistic Prayer that I want to share with you

Look kindly, most compassionate Father,
on those you unite to yourself (**THAT’S US**)
by the Sacrifice of your Son,
and grant that, by the power of the Holy Spirit,
as they (**THAT’S US**) partake of this one Bread and one Chalice,
they may be gathered into one Body in Christ,
who heals every division.

Jesus needs us to be his hands and feet to heal every division will you join HIM ?

Amen