

[Saturday]

So I hope Fr. Chuck was good to you last week! I was off giving the opening and closing prayers at the Missouri Medical Association Convention in Kansas City – as they inaugurated their new president: Dr. John Stanley – a parishioner of Holy Family who invited me to be present.

So last Sunday, I preached about the need to get in touch with and nurture our sense of AWE OR AMAZEMENT -- if we are going to be the effective witnesses of the Resurrection we are called to be.

One of my seminary professors years ago called Amazement: “a total attitude of life that recognizes a marvelous dimension to all existence, delights in it, and is open to its re-creative power.”

The challenge I gave everyone was to go forth and be amazed at something in the coming week – so you missed out on that piece of homework.

[Sunday]

Amazement: “a total attitude of life that recognizes a marvelous dimension to all existence, delights in it and is open to its re-creative powers.”

So your homework, of sorts, was to go forth from Mass last week and to be amazed at something. . .

Anyone have anything they want to share that amazed them this week???

(Well) Let me tell you a couple of things that gave me a sense of amazement this past week. . .

On Sunday, Confirmation for our Deanery was held in Carrollton. I was fortunate enough to be sitting where I could see the faces of the young people as the Bishop anointed them with Chrism. I was amazed at just watching the expressions on the faces of those 25 or so who were Confirmed – and hoped it was because they were amazed at the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them.

Tuesday morning I was driving from Kansas City out to St. Jude to have Mass. As I usually do, I get off the interstate in Grain Valley and then come in on R.D. Mize road. Those of you familiar with that road know that there is a high voltage electric line that runs on the south side of the road – and at 8:15 or so that morning as I travelled east – the sun was hitting all those insulators on the poles just right – so that they just glowed a rich blue – and I was amazed at that long string of lights leading me into Oak Grove.

Tuesday night, I attended the Kansas City “Tables of Faith” celebration hosted by the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Alliance. How amazing it was – almost a Pentecost-like experience – to be in the midst of several hundred people of various faiths -- and hear 25 or so of them -- pray to God through the lens of their unique faith: Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, even a Wiccan or two. . .

And of course was truly amazed at the working of the Holy Spirit early Tuesday morning to hear that Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Finn. Let us pray that Pope Francis will send us a good shepherd – one who listens to our needs as readily as we listen to his direction.

Archbishop Joseph Naumann of the Archdiocese of Kansas City is serving as our interim Administrator – so don't be surprised when we now pray in the Eucharistic prayer for Joseph, our Bishop. . .

And then nothing is so amazing as seeing the glow of a newly ordained priest – as I was able to see at Atchison with the ordination of Simon Baker.

He had tears of joy at the end of the ceremony and was overwhelmed with the outpouring of the Spirit upon him.

Each of these experiences led me to a greater appreciation for our incredibly marvelous, amazingly wonderful – God.

So just to review before we advance --- IF we want to be effective witnesses of the Risen Lord in the world today – then we have to become merciful: just as our heavenly Father is merciful. We must get in touch with and nurture our sense of amazement. AND – we have to become good listeners – especially to the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls us – so that we can be one flock, with one shepherd. . .

We have to become good listeners. . . but we are constantly being bombarded with things to listen to – how can we filter the important from the non-important? It all depends on the priorities we set for ourselves – and what we choose to listen to.

A Native American was in downtown New York, walking along with a friend who lived in the City. Suddenly he said, “Listen, I hear a cricket. . .”

His friend replied – how can you possibly hear a cricket amidst all this noise? NO—I hear a cricket, I’m sure of it. . .

“It’s noon – people are bustling about, cars are honking their horns, taxis are squealing, noise surrounds us – how can you possibly hear a cricket?”

“I’m sure I do.” He listened intently and then walked to the corner, found a shrub in a large cement planter. He dug beneath a leaf and found a cricket.

His friend was duly astounded. The Native American immediately said – “no, my ears are no different from yours. It simply depends on what you are listening for. Here I will show you.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of change – a few quarters, some dimes, nickels and pennies. And through them all on the sidewalk.

In spite of the bustling people, horns honking, taxis squealing, and noise all around --- every head within a block turned and looked. . .

“See what I mean – it all depends on what you are listening for.”

Yes, we are constantly being bombarded with things to listen to – but what do we train our ears and hearts to actually hear --- because that’s what we will pay attention to!

The voice of the Good Shepherd is constantly calling out to us --- but have we trained our hearts to listen?

Perhaps we need to turn down the audible distractions in our lives in order to listen better. So, turn off the tv. Take out the ear buds connected to the ipod. Turn off the radio or CD player in the car. Create some quiet around us – and intentionally listen to that still, quiet voice within us – the voice of the one who loves us no matter what.

The one who wants us to listen to our name being called --- no matter how far we’ve strayed. The one who thinks we’re not just good – but very good. The one who doesn’t want us to be afraid of anything. The one who wants us to come and follow after him.

This week, let’s do our best to listen – to the voice of the good shepherd.

