

Fr. Jeff's Weekly Homily

6th Sunday of Easter
April 27, 2008

READING 1: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

There was great joy in that city...Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 66

Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

READING 2: 1 Peter 3:15-18

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

GOSPEL: John 14:15-21

I live and you will live.

All the world cries out with joy; because he is alive, we are alive.

A few years ago, Fr. Al and I were taking a course at Mundelien Seminary near Chicago. I took off one afternoon and went to a nearby health and fitness center. There was a climbing wall at this place and as I was working out, I found myself drawn to that wall. When I was a child I fell off our garage roof and have been a little leery of heights ever since. One of the health club employees was there when I finally went downstairs to the base of the wall. He gave me a few instructions and told me that for safety the climber wears a harness around his waist. The harness is attached to a rope that runs up through a pulley and then down into the hands of the instructor who secures it as the climber climbs. It sounded simple. In my mind, I kept hearing the song: "*Live like you are dying,*" so I decided to give it a go.

It wasn't the easiest start but I was on my way up and feeling pretty good about myself. As I got to about the half way point, I could see the guys on the second floor working out. I was wishing I had a friend there to witness me conquering this wall. But I was not used to his kind of exercise. My old rotator cuff started to ache and my muscles started to tire. I thought there's no fool like an old fool; what a dope I am. I was approaching the third floor and feeling the height of it. Oh man, *what was I thinking!?! My fingers were sore, and my legs were hurting.* The instructor said something encouraging but I didn't appreciate it. I was sweating and without boring you with all the details, my feet slipped, my hands slipped and down I fell. I fell hard.

My life started flashing before my eyes. But I didn't fall far. My instructor had a firm hold on the rope. Because he was alert and because he was strong, my fall lasted only a couple of seconds. I bounced and swung in the harness, suspended in mid-air. He said, "You're almost to the top, I've got you, go ahead. I gulped and finished the climb." Then he eased me down by way of the rope. When I got down, I didn't feel triumphant as much as grateful. I thanked the guy who had held me when I was falling.

We all fall in various ways all the time. Our feet slip on exaggerated expectations and broken promises. Our fingers slip on good intentions and wicked temptations. We tell a little lie here and cheat a little there waste our time and miss our chances. When I look back on my life, I can't tell you how many times I thought I would hit the bottom hard only to find myself suspended in midair, secured by a pair of strong, nail pierced hands. "I've got you," he says, "keep trying." And so I do. I know that his strength will make up for my weakness. Does it resonate with you at all? Does it sound familiar?

Because he lives, we live—that is Good News!

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