

We belong to a goal-oriented society. We are always striving for the next accomplishment. Parents measure their children's progress through life by accomplishments, crawling, first steps, potty training, entering school, etc. At some point, the parents' goals become the child's goals. Good grades, success in sports or hobbies or scouting. Then as we graduate high school, or as in my case, not, and move into the workforce or college, we start to take charge of setting our own goals, but in fact where we put ourselves in society tends to drive those goals. In the military or corporate America, or any other organized profession for some reason our goals match a planned career path. Then we have our family life, and goals there as well. Marriage, children, home, and eventually retirement; the normal progression through life.

This is all good, but throughout we tend to fail to ask ourselves a simple question. Once we reach our goal, what are we going to do with it? Years ago I was sitting in a tent with a good friend as he talked about what he wanted to do with his military career. His answer was that he wanted to be a Colonel because his father and uncle had been Colonels. I allowed that that was all well and good, but what was he going to do with the rank once he had it? Other than the obvious financial benefits, what was he going to contribute to the Army that had to wait until he made Colonel?

My friend didn't have an answer. He, like all of us at more times than we are actually willing to admit, was like a dog chasing a car. What are we going to do with it once we catch it? Chew on the tires?

We are here today, on the greatest feast of the year, to celebrate the Paschal Mystery. Our Lord, Jesus Christ died a horrible death for us, was buried and has risen from the dead. He gave us the gifts of Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Orders. At Cana he validated his previous gift and gave his blessing to Marriage as the one gift not forfeit by Original Sin or washed away in the flood. In a few short days, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, he will give the gift of Confirmation. All of these gifts have more gifts within them.

But instead of looking at them as the gifts that they are, we turn them into goals. Some parents bring their children to religious education

just so they can receive the sacraments, and once that is complete, the participation and education stops. We see the same pattern of behavior after some young couples marry. It is almost like the box has been checked, and they don't know what to do next. It is like they have decided after all that chasing, car tires don't taste that good after all.

I have to confess that I am speaking from experience. I had a period in my life where I didn't darken the doors of the Church except to get married for years. In time the gentle, persistent love and faith of my wife brought me back into the Church. I stopped checking the box, and it changed every aspect of my life.

And so what do we do with our faith? Those of us who have just spent a year or more in formation in order to come into the Church, what is next? For those of us making a semi-annual pilgrimage to the Church, is this visit going to bring you home; and those of us who make it to Mass every week, how do we keep this from becoming routine? We have all met our goal, we all have faith, now what do we do with it?

The first thing we do with our faith is to realize that it gives us hope. Hope in the Resurrection; hope that God and his Mother, our Mother and our Guardian Angels are all looking out for us. Hope in the fact that they all love us more than any parent on earth could ever love a their child. Hope in the forgiveness of our sins, hope in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, hope in the graces of our Sacrament of Marriage to help us and our spouses when times are tough. Hope that we will have comfort when we are sick, and in the end; hope for eternal life with Our Lord and all the Saints in heaven when our time is done here on earth.

The next thing we have to do with our faith is to spread that hope to others. That starts with the example of our lives. Other people should be able to look at us and decide that they want what we have. Not the material things in life, but the depth and quality of our marriage relationships, the closeness of our families, the peace we have in our hearts that is visible as we speak to others.

But you have doubts, you have difficulties, you struggle. I have difficulties, and I struggle just like you. I remember praying one time and in the conversation I said; "Lord, I have never doubted in you.

I've had my struggles with the Church, but never with you. I wonder what it would feel like to doubt." Silly me, we should be careful what we pray for! I have never felt so devastated, so alone, so empty in my life. The world went from sunny and full of life to dark and cold and empty. The feeling probably lasted just long enough for me to draw a breath. I said ENOUGH! I got it, and I never ever want to experience that feeling again! I understand doubt.

We can't let these problems take hope away. The Passion was a struggle, Jesus fell 3 times, he also got up 3 times. We all fall; it is because we are human. It is the number of times we get back up that counts. As long as we have hope and we get up as many times as we fall, we are winning and the devil is losing.

So it has been years since you fell, so what! You are still alive, get back up and exercise your hope! Sometimes it takes a while to sort out our hearts. That is OK, Jesus understands us better than we understand ourselves. Say a prayer, shake his hand, and come back home to reconcile, all will be forgiven.

I tell people all of the time that we are in the business of miracles. Each Sacrament contains a multitude of miracles. The ability to pray, to have a conversation one on one with God is a miracle, to appeal to the Blessed Virgin Mary and all of the Saints is a miracle. The gift of our lives is a miracle and the list is just getting started. When surrounded by all of this beauty, all of these miracles, how can we not have hope? How can we keep from radiating our faith and our hope to everyone we come into contact with?

So what do we do with our faith now that we have it? We spread the hope that we have because of our faith to our families and to the world that needs it so much.