

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (A)

May 3, 2026

“A parish”

What is a parish? A parish is a portion of the People of God, located in a particular area. This weekend’s Scriptures give us insight into the true nature of a parish, which is important because that is where most people live the faith on a local level.

First, the parish is **an oasis of sacramental life**. Saint Luke, in Acts chapter 6, describes the call of the first deacons. The reason they were ordained was because Greek widows complained about discriminatory treatment in the distribution of bread.

The Apostles responded by laying hands on certain men so they could assist in meeting the needs of the body. In this sacred action, the Apostles underscored the fact that the Word and prayer are primary. The Church feeds the hungry, but it is not a food pantry; the Church provides clothing to the naked, but it is not a Salvation Army; the Church provides housing assistance to the homeless, but it is not a sacred Habitat for Humanity. It is a holy community sustained by sacramental grace.

The sacraments nourish the soul and prayer brings us into communion with God. That’s the main purpose of these signs of water, oil, hands, the Sign of the Cross, a man and woman, bread and wine: to help us encounter the Lord and grow in holiness as we seek salvation of souls.

Children are baptized at the font, nourished at the Eucharistic table, reconciled to God in the confessional, married at the altar, and buried in consecrated ground. The Church’s sacraments provide starving souls with necessary food.

The parish is also **a center of pastoral care**. Saint Peter’s reading talks about the Church as “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,*” sent to care for others. The parish is the place where people can find comfort in their sorrow, healing in their sickness, and strength in their weakness.

Through priests, deacons, and lay ministers, the hand of Christ touches the faithful and makes the community a holy place. The priesthood of the baptized aims at offering the sacrifice of prayer and bringing devotion to people's lives.

In the gospel, Our Lord talks about himself as "*the way, the truth, and the life*". Jesus is not one way to Heaven, or the best way to Heaven, or the most direct way to Heaven, but instead the ONLY way to heaven. His goal is to lead us to the Father, and Jesus provides the best pastoral care through us.

The parish is **an outpost of missionary endeavor**. We are called to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The parish gives birth to and strengthens the work of lay missionaries, men and women called and gifted to take Christ to dark corners where he is not known and to bring him again to people who have lost faith in him.

All 160 parishes of our archdiocese are undergoing massive change, and it is a challenge for you and your shepherds. Parish life next year will not look the same. Even though we continue "fishing for souls," if you will, we will do it in new ways with new energy, new structures, and new direction.

It is not easy, and will get harder as the months go on. But with trust in God's grace, we can together transform the world and grow in the process. Life is not about holding on, but about letting go and letting God lead our work.

In this Easter Season, on this special weekend, may the prayers of Mary, the Mother of God, sustain us as we face the future together.

God bless you.