

Sunday, April 26, 2020

Dear St. Raymond Family:

Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all. Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.
(Colossians 3:9-13)

Among the five components of physical fitness, body composition is concerned with taking off excess fat so that the body can function in an optimal way. Likewise, in a healthy spiritual life, the **component of HEALING** is something that we all must engage. We all need to look at our lives and ask ourselves how we need to trim away parts of ourselves that stop us from becoming the men and women that God has created us to be.

On Easter Sunday, the Letter to the Colossians encouraged all of us who are share in the power of the Resurrection to raise our thoughts to a higher plane: *If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above...think of what is above.* (Colossians 3:1-2) The letter goes on to show us what that means. We need to take off the dead weight of the old self. In Christ, we have been given the power of self-renewal; the capacity for a spiritual make-over. We are invited to think differently about ourselves - to reclaim our identity as men and women created in the image of God and full of positive potential.

One way of healing is to stop replaying in our minds the negative messages we have received about ourselves from others. The Letter to the Colossians says that every time we put someone else down we really lie to them, since we are all children of God and loved by God. Greeks are not better than Jews, Jews are not better than Gentiles, free men are not better than barbarians or slaves. More social media friends do not make us a better person. We are all human persons made in the divine image. The Church is the place where the equal value of all persons is honored and respected. *Christ is all and is in all.* As missionary disciples, we are called to affirm our own value, and then to affirm the value of others. That is what it means to love others as we love ourselves.

Another way of healing is through forgiveness. We can be kept from a healthy spiritual life if we are unable to receive forgiveness, and if we are unable to forgive. Healing means being open to receiving forgiveness from God; Pope Francis says: "There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter." (*Evangelii gaudium* 6) We need to be honest with ourselves about our failures. But the reason we do that is because we are confident that God's love and mercy allow us to move beyond them. To be spiritually healthy, we need to open our hearts to God's forgiving love, let it penetrate us out hearts, so that we can leave behind memories of things that we regret. *It is I who wipe out your offenses for my own sake; your sins I remember no more.* (Isaiah 43:25) As missionary disciples, we are called to gently and patiently help others to overcome feelings of shame and inadequacy that keep them from growing into the new life that Christ offers them.

Healing also means forgiving others; the Lord's Prayer constantly reminds us: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* We can grow spiritually only as we are able to put aside anger and resentment at the ways that others have hurt us. As we leave behind memories of how we have been mistreated by others, we are free to develop the potential that God has given us in new ways. God can turn the injuries and injustices of our past

into a capacity to empathize with others. Then we can take our part in the ministry of solidarity with those who have been affected by injustice and have not received the love they need. So let us continue to embrace the power of the Resurrection in this Easter season. **Let us allow the power of Christ to heal us, and to transform us into powerful witnesses of God's love who can bring healing to others.**

Do not fear, then: the Lord loves your life, even when you are afraid to look at it and take it in hand. In Easter he shows you how much he loves that life: even to the point of living it completely, experiencing anguish, abandonment, death and hell, in order to emerge triumphant to tell you: "You are not alone; put your trust in me!" (Pope Francis, Easter Vigil 2019)

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Scott Hebden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Scott Hebden, Pastor