

St Raymond De Penafort

"Welcome. Love. Serve."

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we continue to reflect on the components of spiritual fitness that are the foundation for our mission, **LEARNING** corresponds to muscular strength among the components of physical fitness. Muscular strength is the capacity to perform the basic movements needed for life and work. In the spiritual life, it is the word of God which enables us to effectively discern how to engage the tasks and challenges of life. So the first thing that Jesus does after the Resurrection is teach the disciples. *They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"* (Luke 24:32)

This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his (Exodus 24:8). Our life with God is lived in a covenant relationship that begins at Baptism. It is significant that the fundamental promise that parents make at the Baptism of an infant is the promise to teach - to raise their child in the faith - to make their home a place of learning about the faith. Later, as a young adult, each person makes a Confirmation of this covenant for themselves, of their own free choice. At this point, there is a fork in the road. Either the person will continue to choose to make the word of God the guide for their life; or, they may feel that they have graduated from learning and place the word of God to one side.

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) If we choose the path of continued learning, then the Scriptures will become a serious part of our life. As the community gathers to renew the covenant in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the reading and preaching of the Scriptures connect us with the history of salvation to which we belong. The Scriptures are the inspired word of God which, through personal reading and meditation, offers us insight into the events of life that enable us to discern our way and to take our part in the mission of the Church. Knowledge of the Scriptures makes us *competent and equipped* to collaborate with God in transforming the world around us.

I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in them will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. (John 15:5, 7) The word of God in Scripture becomes the basis for the Church to develop the understanding of God as Trinity, and of ourselves as human persons created in the image of God. Following the model of Jesus, who prayed the Old Testament Psalms, the Church has always affirmed that Scripture guides us in effective prayer. The Church has always affirmed that the capacity for reason is central to the image of God in us. The Church has always affirmed that the spiritual journey is one of *fides quaerens intellectum* (St. Anselm) - faith seeking understanding.

The word of God has enabled the Church to lead the way in the development of scientific method as the highest expression of human reason. For example, check out the website inters.org of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. In the learning process, science and faith are never opposed if kept in their proper order and perspective. Learning through faith enables us to discern the proper value and meaning of things. Learning through reason and scientific method enables us to understand the complexity of the order of creation and to draw

out its fruits. We are seeing a good example of that proper balance now, in the midst of the health crisis that is facing humanity. We are discerning how to maintain the value and meaning of worship as we support the scientific process of understanding how to heal disease, to restore the order of creation, and to preserve human life. Social distancing expresses the fundamental Christian value of respect for all human life. We have been able to use technology, the fruit of science, to maintain our relationship to God and to one another in prayer.

All good giving is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures...Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves, For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. (James 1:16-18, 22-24) Through listening to the word of God, we continually affirm the truth of who we are as children of God, loved by God. That leads us to want to share that truth with others as missionary disciples of Jesus. We can speak the words of God to others who need to hear them - words of mercy, of encouragement, of consolation, of affirmation, of love. So, in this Easter season, let us resolve to embrace the mission that we have received from the risen Jesus. Let us be faithful hearers, learners, speakers and doers of the word of God, who bring the light of the gospel to the world.

Peace be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Scott Hebden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and "H".

Fr. Scott Hebden, Pastor