

## **Easter 4 C 2010 St Scholastica Anniversary Mass**

Acts 13:14, 43-52; Revelation 7:9, 14-17; John 10: 27-30

Imagine, if you will, people of every color and race, nation, language gathered together into one into one body with equal dignity; they are women and men, young and old, parents and children, gay and lesbian and straight, poor and wealthy, able-bodied and mentally or physically challenged; paradoxically washed white (the sum of all the colors of the spectrum, as Isaac Newton said) in the blood of the Lamb, the life force unleashed by the crucified Jesus and infused into his followers by the Spirit. It is the Lamb who is shepherd, from whose hands no one can snatch the sheep. We may be bloodied in the earthly struggle, but we are empowered in his loving life force.

These scriptures you heard 50 or more years ago, and many times since, but don't they have a different tone, a deeper meaning today?

When Class of 55 heard these words, McDonalds had built their 1<sup>st</sup> golden arches, Elvis Presley was rock and roll idol, women's swim suits were \$12.95. Emmett Till a 14 yr old black teen was murdered in Mississippi while "In God We Trust" was added to paper currency.

When the Half Century Class heard these ss in their senior year, the cold war was becoming colder, JFK was poised to reach for a New Frontier. Pope John XXIII had announced Vatican II. , a loaf of Silvercup Bread was 20 cents, Six African nations gained independence from France while the

Class of 60 was pressing for independence from Sister Judith. Bono was born and The Twist started a new dance craze at the November Nocturne, or was it the Mistletoe Mood?

The Vietnam War was much on the mind of the Class of '65, as was the Anti-war movement and civil unrest, Martin Luther King's March to Selma. Paul VI's "War no more" speech at the UN, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Men's hair was longer, women's skirts were shorter. Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music stole our hearts.

The drop in the voters age made the graduates of the Class of 70 eligible to vote. The Beatles recorded "Let It Be" their final album before disbanding. . The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was ratified by 43 states, the first Earth Day was celebrated, and the largest rock festival ever, 600,000 strong was held on the Isle of Wight.

And through all these years a gallon of gas increased from 23 to 35 cents.

In June 1960, 243 accomplished young women of the Half Century Class graduated from St. Scholastica Academy. Relief for some for whom high school years might have been bittersweet, anxiety for others, heading 'out of the house and into the world'.

A few weeks ago I visited with Maureen Cogan, Maryanne Littau and my sister Sandy McLaughlin to talk about this

liturgy, your anniversary and the Class of '60. I thought perhaps I'd learn some stories, mythological or otherwise about the class. What I heard instead were stories, of Benedictine Sisters who shepherded you. Who held you and refused to let anyone snatch you out of their hands. That holding may not always have been pleasant, when it involved discipline or academic demand. But as I listened then and to others since then, I learned that they taught you both to listen and to find your voice. They held you and called you to life, that you, in turn, could do the same. (I once asked a mom her secret in raising 8 fine youngsters. She said: Robert, I have always held them with an open hand.) That's what your teachers did, like...

+Sister Gabriel, who opened your eyes and ears and most especially your hearts to those struggling for justice at St Martin de Porres on the West Side where some tutored children, others visited the projects, learning to listen to the cry of the poor.

And Sister Mercedes whose just and quiet presence, along with +Sister Catherine, mentor in kindness, gave you a voice to speak boldly against prejudice and bigotry, against the exclusion of people because of their accent, their skin color, or national or ethnic roots. They taught you, as the song from *South Pacific* says:

*You've got to be taught... to fear and to hate,  
To be afraid of people whose eyes are oddly made  
And people whose skin is a different shade  
You've got to be carefully taught.*

They taught you otherwise: they helped you to find your voice for justice and peace and equality, taught you to hold, to embrace all of the human family, with open hands and generous hearts.

There were many shepherds here who called you by name and called you to life.

Isn't that what Sister Eleanor did, who prepared you well for college, whose excitement over Sir Laurence Olivier's 1937 Hamlet, enkindled your own.

And +Sister Gerard (Miriam), who taught you not only to decline Latin verbs: "laudo, laudas, laudat..." but even more important, to observe, judge and act as Young Christian Students.

And Librarian +Sister Mary Paul, who had a remarkable way of lifting you up in hard times just by telling you: "You are good!" words that so many teen agers so desperately need to hear. She, like all good teachers, sought to catch you doing something good!

As did +Sister Estelle, who, through art and music, opened you to the beauty of God's creation and the splendor of human life, as did Sister Callista, music maker then, as now, who taught you that "there's always music among the trees in the garden if your hearts are still enough to hear it."

+Sister Mary Jude, whose name rhymes with "Joog", better known as Jug, a great math teacher who was exceedingly

fair to all. Were you afraid of her? Sometimes! But this tough woman of God stood at your side. Always!

You learned by playing in Sister Aurelia's lab as she presided over biology class with her jolly chin, twinkling eyes and good humor...and jelly fish?

+Sister Grace, "la maestra muy exigente del espanol", strict but fair...helping you learn in bite-size segments. There were lay teachers too: Mrs Flood, Miss Bierstensen and others.

There was +Mother Laura and Sister Judith (aka Bernadette Murphy) who, one of you told me, could have been CEO of IBM; much beloved, a bit frightening to some but just to all..(She had a special relationship with our dad, who held a record in selling raffle tickets for the car donated by Jim Moran, the Courtesy Man. Later, of course, Z Frank, father of Annette Hines took over the car donation.)

They all shepherded you, they called you to life, and helped you to find your own voice. They prepared you for the insights and inspiration of the Holy Spirit that washed through the church in Vatican II. They taught you to trust your own path and the real voice that was emerging.

The past fifty years have been a mix of joy and sadness, success and failure, gain and loss. Thirty of the Class of '60 have already passed through the gates to the throne of the Lamb. Some of you have buried spouses and children, as well as parents. You've lived through Vietnam and Iraq and

now Afghanistan. You've seen up close the assassination of two Kennedy's and Martin Luther King, Jr. You've witnessed riots in our cities and revelations of human cruelty too brutal to grasp. And You've been part of sweeping changes in the church that opened wide the windows to the fresh air of the Spirit and you, and all of us now struggle with that same church, rocked by scandal and so slow to practice the equality of discipleship that the Benedictine Sisters taught you. You have seen our sisters and brothers of different color and language hurting bad as the doorway to this immigrant Land of the Free is tightly shut to the *tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free*. At the same time, you've been blessed to see the extension of health care to 30 million more Americans, and you've witnessed the courageous, self-sacrifice of your own sons and daughters who, perhaps not as active as you in their religious practice, are every bit as generous and more, as they try to do their part to shape a more welcoming world for your grandchildren.

You handed on to them what the shepherds of St. Scholastica handed on to you. The lambs became the shepherds, and now your children and grandchildren are called to the same task. To call each other to life. To help one another find their voice and use it to build a just society, amid the obstacles not unlike those Paul and Barnabas met as they were chased from town to town for proclaiming the Gospel.

As we gather at this table of Eucharist, breaking bread and sharing the cup of Thanksgiving for these past years and for

those who have shaped your lives, we share the assurance of the Risen Lord, the Shepherd Lamb that no one will ever snatch us out of his hand. As you have been held, so hold one another tight, but paradoxically, with open hands. Hold this often bruised and blood-stained world in your hands, and don't let it go. Hold fast to the vision of the great multitude, that no one can count, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples, and languages, standing before the throne, washed white---every color under the sun—in the blood of the Lamb.

Congratulations! Happy Easter!

Fr. Bob Oldershaw,  
Brother of Sandy Oldershaw McLaughlin, '60