

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER–2018

I'd like to continue with last week's theme of what it really means to believe in the Resurrection, that Jesus really did rise from the dead.. What are the consequences of that belief? How does it impact our lives in real and practical ways as individuals, as families, as a Faith Community? Bottom line, do we really believe that Jesus is risen and that he is really with us. Is it just something that we have grown up with and perhaps have never thought about its impact on us?

I think that most of us would agree that it's not far-fetched or a stretch to say that as a culture and society, many people seem to thrive on constant activity and busyness. How often do we hear or say that there are not enough hours in the day to do all the things that we think need to be done? Aren't weekends supposed to be times to rest, relax and recreate? How many of us, because of all that we were doing, come to Monday saying to ourselves or others, "another lost weekend" or "I can't believe it's Monday again?"

We can get so busy sometimes that we cut ourselves off from what is going on around us and, while physically present to others, we can be emotionally very distant; even from God. We can even be that way in relation to ourselves. We can get so occupied and preoccupied with so many things that we stop paying attention to ourselves, to our feelings and to our needs. This can happen in the short-term and in the long-term. When this happens, when we get too busy and too consumed by activity, we close ourselves off from the possibility of growing and nurturing our relationship with God, our families, our friends and ourselves.

Remember the 7 capital sins? We might do well to consider over-activity or being too busy as number eight. I don't mean this in a nice or cute way. It really is sinful because it gets in the way of growing and relationships. One problem is that, working very hard to the point of work alcoholism is viewed as something positive and is even fostered and promoted in a "work real-hard" and "put in those extra hours environment." Sometimes business can be very cut-throat in terms of keeping a job or getting promoted. Overtime will bring in more money, but at what cost? Some of you might be saying, "Fr. Ross you don't live out there in the trenches of raising a family, owning a house, paying for education, etc." That's true in one sense, but in another, I'm right there beside you.

Allowing oneself to become too busy is a real possibility for all of us, no matter who we are and what we are called to do. Sometimes being too busy can be our way of not dealing with certain things going on around us or within us; we can avoid facing unpleasant feelings or situations by keeping ourselves occupied; we always have the excuse of not having enough time

or energy. Sometimes, and this can happen very gradually, we can keep taking on one more thing, always saying yes to others and, after a while, we start not taking care of ourselves. Half jokingly, I tell people that I suffer from something called one-more-thing-its. Unchecked, even though we are doing good and helpful things, if we do not take time for ourselves, even the most holy of activities can become a drudgery and life-draining, rather than life-giving. Then we are no good to anyone.

We find ourselves in this time of Easter, celebrating the new life Jesus makes possible for us when we accept his friendship and make that friendship the center of our lives. Like every and any friendship, it has to be nourished and nurtured. That means time and energy. In that friendship, we are able to keep things balanced and focused, giving proper attention to the different things that make up our lives. If we are not careful, it is easy for things to get out of whack and that is why it is so important to try and maintain a balance in our lives, making sure that we have time to step back and calmly and reflectively look at what we are doing and what is going on around us.

Each of the three readings today speak about repentance and the forgiveness of sins. I would invite each of us to step back and ask ourselves if we are sinning in the area of doing too much or too little. Whether too much or too little, it is striving for that balanced life that will allow us to concretely and in real ways experience what Easter is all about in the here and now of our daily lives. It will allow us to keep in touch with the life-giving sources that will allow to be joyful and content.

All this might sound easy, but it's not. It's difficult to step back and reflect. It can be painful to come to grips with and face what might be causing us discomfort and it's never easy to face the fact that we might need to change some things in our lives. If we can do this on a regular basis, we can adjust little by little rather than having to do a complete overhaul if allow things to get out of hand.

Finally, this is an area where we can help those around us, reminding, encouraging and challenging each other to take the necessary time that we need keep focused on what is most important and life-giving in our lives. We can help each remember the most important gift that we have to offer one another is not what we do or what we have, but who we are. That is the gift that keeps on giving even we are doing nothing at all. May this Easter make a real difference in our lives.