

Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak
michaelt@stmoside.org
758-4100 x100

What is a Parish?

“On a dangerous seacoast, where ships were often wrecked, there was once a crude, little life-station, a mere hut, with only one boat and few devoted members.

But this Spartan crew, toiling day and night through the dangers of storms at sea, saved many lives and so became very famous and much admired.

Many of those who had been saved, and others attracted by their heroic lives, joined up.

New crews were trained, new lifeboats acquired, and the life-saving effort increased.

Some members, unhappy that the station was so crude and ill equipped, enlarged the building, decorated it exquisitely and furnished it very handsomely.

The life-saving station became a club, with the result that few members wanted to go to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do the work.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of survivors, half-drowned, cold, wet, and dirty.

Most of these survivors were foreigners with skin color and cultural background different than most of the others in the station.

The beautiful new life-saving clubhouse was in chaos, so the property committee at once had a shower-house built outside the club.

There the survivors could be cleaned up, before being brought into the club.

At the next club meeting, the membership suffered a split over its perceived purpose.

Most wanted to stop the life-saving activities, because they interrupted and hindered the normal social life of the club members.

The few who insisted that life saving was their primary purpose were voted down.

They were told that, if they wanted to save lives, they could build their own life-saving station on down the coast, and so they did.

But, as the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old.

It too evolved into a club; so, yet another life-saving station was founded.

But history continued to repeat itself, so that, if you visit that coast today, you will find a number of exclusive social clubs along that shore.

Shipwrecks still occur frequently in those waters, but most victims drown, since the life-saving clubs are no longer interested in dangerous life-saving missions.”

This story is meant to be a reminder, a caution, and a “wake-up call” for people of faith who come together in community. Very quickly, if we are not careful, we can become complacent, and become interested only in our own needs and goals.

In order to stay focused, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and his ministry. He was always “moving” beyond himself and his followers, reaching out to those on the margins of society.

As a faith community, we remember that we are not an end unto ourselves, but rather, a means to an end. We are called to be “life guards” and “life savers.”

F. Mike