

Alone

(excerpted from *For Your Love Alone* by Michael Syslo)

There was a time when the Apostles must have felt totally alone – abandoned, lost and afraid. It was from the time in the garden when Judas' kiss led the guard to take Jesus until His resurrection. The Apostles had fled the brewing nightmare. They abandoned the man they believed to be their Messiah, the Son of God. Then all the reports came in slowly while they were hiding and afraid to make themselves known. Jesus was tried, convicted, and executed. It all happened so quickly. It was done before they realized all that took place. Yes, their God was dead.

How much more alone can you feel? They felt the guilt of running away when it all started. They went into hiding, not knowing if the soldiers were only after Jesus or if they were also after His followers. One, in addition to running away, actually denied knowing the man – three times, at that. The man they thought would lead Israel to new life was dead. The man who was their teacher, their friend, their master, their brother, was dead. The man they devoted three years of their lives to following was dead. The man they believed to be the Son of God was dead. How can you kill God!? Now all they believed was in question. Even when they eventually got together to muddle their way through it all, they were alone. The dark night of the soul had a strong grip on all of them.

Then it happened. The stories started coming in – too good to be true. He was alive. The women who went to the grave found it empty. Mary Magdalene said she saw Him. John and Peter could not find his body. Their two friends from Emmaus said they walked with Him, talked with Him. Then He came. And what did He say to greet them? “Peace be to you.” His first words were not: here I am, I am really alive, you are saved. No, He offered them peace. He knew what state they were in. He knew how alone and lost they felt. He knew the anxiety that was running rampant. So, He gave them what they needed – peace. He restored their hope.

We are taught that our lives should be an imitation of Jesus. This especially holds true in our St. Vincent de Paul ministry. How many times do we encounter people who are alone, lost, afraid of what life is bringing them? How many sad and heart wrenching stories have we listened to? How many food boxes have we given? How many bills have we paid? How many people have we taken off the streets and sheltered? How many people have we rescued from the brink of despair? With all that, what is the true gift that we bring to them? We bring peace. We bring hope.

Because of our faith, we can say to the lonely and forgotten, “You are not alone. God has not abandoned you. God loves you. Things will be better. Peace be to you.”