

Homily For Friday of the 1st Week of in Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - January 13, 2023

Hebrews 4:1-5,11 "Let us make every effort to enter into that place of rest."

Psalms 78:3-8 "Do not forget the works of the Lord."

Mark 2:1-12 "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."

Enter Into His Rest

Introduction

I remember being asked: Which is the greatest day of creation? Some might say the stars and the cosmos, and we have new scientific revelations seemingly every day about how vast and amazing is the cosmos. That conversation would likely get around to the creation of life, especially humans. Everything was good, but only man and woman were 'very good'. But the answer I always remember hearing was that the greatest day of creation was the seventh day. That's odd. How come? God did not create anything on the seventh day. It tells us he rested. Well, why not? He must have been very tired after six very busy days, making everything. That makes sense to children.

But, in faith, we know that God did not need rest. In fact, there was no such thing until he created rest. Why is that important? Because you can't rest from something unless you have done something. We have a culture in the world which wants to rest and have fun all the time. But even in the world, there has to be a rest from something. It makes no sense otherwise. God created rest so that we would be assured that he had indeed made everything. It's like the exclamation mark at the end of creation. It tells us that all has been made and all is good.

The biblical call, Old Testament and New Testament, is to "enter into God's rest." God made rest but there is still one thing that needs to happen. We need to enter into it. It is like the Eucharist. Jesus is the temple where the sacrifice is made. He is the priest who offers the sacrifice. He is the sacrifice itself. As with the Father at

creation. He has done everything that we could not do for ourselves, but we have to do one thing. We have to come to the altar and enter into his sacrifice. We have to consume what he offers, not just in our bodies but in our hearts.

Hebrews

Today is the second day in a row where we have the letter to the Hebrews discussing God's Day of Rest. Moses kept telling the people to prepare themselves to end their wilderness wandering so that they could properly enter the promised land with the right spirit, so that they would be fully able to enter into the rest that the land of promise offered. God gave everything at creation and did it again in Jesus.

Now we have to persevere in faith. After our baptism, we are still in the world but we must enter the true promised land of heaven. Their rest was after being homeless and wandering. Ours is to enter heaven. But they murmured and disregarded that rest. If we are like this, we will not enter heaven. Our homes, no matter how nice, are not eternal rest. Pray every day. We are to strive to celebrate with the Church this final and greatest Rest into which God entered after he conquered death, when all was recreated.

Mark

The passage from Mark does not mention rest but let's see if there is a connection somehow. I love how this passage begins: "It became known that Jesus was at home." I think we probably cannot imagine Jesus just hanging out at home. So, what was he doing? You know he was likely resting from the intensity of the works he was performing. But he wasn't just watching TV and eating Matzo balls. He was in prayer. That was his rest, to commune with the Father. We see it in many places elsewhere in the Gospel. He was human, and so needed his physical rest. Like the Father at creation, he rested from all his labours. But that rest was clearly always both physical and spiritual.

By the way, we know that St. Hilary was one of the great Church Fathers who battled against the Arian heresy, which denied that Jesus was both fully human

and fully divine. Poor Arius didn't go deeply enough into the Gospels. If Arius had read today's gospel passage prayerfully, he would have seen that Jesus allowed his physical rest to be interrupted by the needs of the people. Then he would have noted that this is one of the passages which profoundly reveals that God's first desire is to heal us of what keeps us from spiritually entering into God's rest. That is our sinfulness. So, Jesus first heals the paralytic's sins.

The scribes, hearing him forgive sins, say in their hearts, who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins. And Jesus, because he is God, senses in his heart what is in their hearts. We must memorize what he says next. It is hard to find a more clear understanding of Jesus: "So that you will know the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say to you (turning to the paralytic), get up, pick up your mat and walk." Jesus interrupts his own rest at home to offer spiritual rest, to forgive sins. Then, to make it clear that this is a rest that comes from God alone, he refers to himself as the Son of Man, the title of the messiah from the ancient prophecy of Daniel. He then recreates the man's body, healing it of its paralysis. That man can now walk to his home, physically and spiritually healed. Creation of the physical world and healing of our spiritual nature are joined together in Jesus.

Call To Conversion

Jesus, our Savior, wants to give us a true hope of salvation. He even forgives our sins and sympathizes with our moral weakness. He most emphatically says: "Child, your sins are forgiven."

In this new liturgical time called 'ordinary', God urges us to persevere. Do not neglect the necessary forgiveness he offers all of us in His dwelling, the Church. This is the place of rest he offers us. I have nothing to say that God has not already said and continues to proclaim to us. Brothers and sisters in Christ, Let us enter into his rest.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Sing to the Lord all the earth. In his presence are majesty, and splendour, strength and honour in his holy place.*

Collect: *O Lord, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works.*

Hebrews: *God.*

Psalm: *You.*

Mark: *Jesus*