

Homily For Tuesday of the 8th Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - March 1, 2022

1 Peter 1:10-16 "Do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance."

Psalms 98:1-4 "All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord."

Mark 10:28-31 "Everything who has left anything for my sake will receive one hundred fold."

The Right Question

Introduction

In the old detective stories, when a witness would try to interrupt the detective to get information about the investigation, the detective would usually say something like, "I'll ask the questions here." I always found that attitude kind of arrogant. But the detective always knows that keeping focussed on the right question is the only way to get to the truth that will solve the crime.

We might also look at any wisdom tradition, in philosophy or religion, where asking the right question has always been the most important thing. That is based on the belief that no one can find the answers to the meaning of one's life unless one knows how to ask a question that will lead to a meaningful answer.

Mostly we want answers to the things that bother us. How come the person in front of me is driving so slowly? That's often my question when I am running late. Why did this thing happen to me? Why would God allow such a bad thing to happen to such a good person? Why couldn't I have done this thing instead of that thing? Will the bullies always get their way or will there ever be a time when they get what they deserve?

Mark

If I am hearing Jesus properly in the gospel passages from yesterday and today, I think I am getting a lesson on asking the right question, but not just getting the words of the question right but also having the readiness to hear an answer that might trouble me. The more important the question, the more challenging is the answer going to be to hear.

Yesterday, the rich young man asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" That sounds like a fantastic question. What other question could be more important? And yet, he must have been expecting a different answer than what he got. As the conversation goes on, we get the impression that he was looking for a pat on the back for the holy life he was already living. The answer Jesus gives him is that he only lacks one thing. He is so close! But that one thing is that he has to be willing to give up everything in order to obtain the kingdom. You and I say to each other all the time that you can't take it with you. Yet, we act in this life as if we can take at least some of it with us into the next life.

Then there is today's question from Peter, asked on behalf of the others. They have just witnessed the conversation Jesus had with the rich young man. What's Peter's question? Hey, Jesus, we have already done what you told that guy to do. We have given up everything. So, what will be OUR reward? Again Jesus gives an answer that they might not be ready to hear. You think you have given up everything? Not by a long shot. But you will in time. And for that, your reward will be far beyond what you can imagine or hope for yourself.

But in this life, the disciple will receive persecutions. We see everywhere around the world that Christians are living with this reality of persecution. Jesus never deceives anyone about the cost of being a disciple. It's going to bring troubles. However, Jesus considers persecutions and troubles a reward, for they help us to grow in our likeness to God, who is holy. No one gave up more than our Lord, who emptied himself of the privilege of divinity to take on our nature.

1 Peter

In his first letter, we can see how much Peter learned from the time he asked that question. He came to see the answer to his question was being revealed in the prophets of old, who foretold Jesus going through his passion, death and resurrection, a resurrection in which we are offered a share, far more than a hundredfold times greater than any of the little things I have to give up.

Follow the Saints

The questions we ask are going to demonstrate whether we are willing to trust in the working out of that plan of salvation. Fortunately, we have the saints to help us as guides.

St. Bede says that Jesus does not mean we should stop caring for our family members but rather that we prefer the honor of God to all that is perishable. Pope St. John Paul says that we follow Christ according to what is possible in our life and according to the gifts we have. That will be different for everyone. The Church traditionally dedicates the month of March to the special veneration of St. Joseph, whose feast day is March 19th. We can ask his intercession to help us submit more fully to God's plan of salvation and his will for our life.

Call To Action

Lent is such a wonderful time because it lets us slowly grow in our willingness to let go of what we prize in this life, our comforts and our possessions and our attitudes. This is such a wonderful time because we can practice asking the right questions. What do I need to give up so that I will even be ready to inherit eternal life? What new attitude can I gain which will help me understand my suffering in a holy light instead of with bitterness or anger?

Even my most prized possessions are trinkets compared to what Jesus leaves behind for us. He emptied himself. What am I ready to give up, to empty out of my life, for him, and for the sake of the gospel, the good news. It feels like we have given up a lot these last two years. I have been bitter that we were not allowed to sing the praises of God. This week, it was announced that we will be able to do so. That makes today's psalm pretty special: "Sing to the Lord a new song." And, if you can't sing, I always tell Catholics, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord."

Happy Mardi Gras. Enjoy today all the goodness that is available to us. Then let us joyfully begin again asking the questions that will bring us closer each day to the truth of God's saving love.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice. Turn to the Lord and his strength.*

Collect: *Almighty and ever living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise.*

1 Peter: *Beloved, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours, the Spirit within them testified in advance to the sufferings and the subsequent glory destined for Christ. Therefore prepare your minds for action. Discipline yourselves. Set all your hope on Jesus Christ. Do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves, for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

Psalm: *O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Break forth into joyous song and sing praises.*

Mark: *Peter began to say to Jesus, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age, with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."*