

Homily For Easter - Year C

St Peter's 9:30 AM Sunday Mass - April 21, 2019

Acts 10: 34-43 "We are witnesses to all he did, that they put him to death, that God raised him, and allowed him to appear to us who were chosen, and commanded to testify that he is the one ... "

Psalms 118 "I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord."

Colossians 3: 1-4 "If you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things that are above."

John 20: 1-18 "Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. She turned and saw Jesus standing there. He said to her, "Mary." Mary went and announced, "I have seen the Lord."

Don't Forget This Day

Introduction

How does a goldfish keep from being bored to death swimming around and around in a little bowl, with only maybe a little toy castle to look at in the corner? Some research suggests it's because they have very short attention spans, almost as short as people in the iPhone age - a few seconds more or less. So, they swim around and say to themselves, "Oh, look, there's a castle." They swim around again and say, "Oh, look, there's a castle." And again, "Oh, look, there's a castle." You get what I'm saying.

Now the Jewish people have an idea to explain why every Sabbath day - that's every Saturday - they make sure that everything they do reminds them about what God did for them throughout their history as his chosen people. They say that humans cannot remember the most important things about their lives for more than seven days. So, they have to make sure they worship God at least every seven days or they will forget about God.

Now we Christians kind of do the same thing, except we do it on Sunday. In fact, those Sundays are so important that we come up with different kinds of funny names, kind of like nicknames, for Sunday. For example, we call every Sunday **A Little Easter**. Every Sunday is like a little Easter. Not that there is an Easter bunny and Easter eggs every week. That would be fun too, but no, it's because God did something pretty amazing on the first Easter Sunday. And, because we don't want

to forget how important that first Easter was, we do stuff to remember it every week, on Sunday. We don't want to go more than seven days, because we know ... What do we know? We know that if we don't keep remembering that God gave us life, that God wants to know us and to be part of our life, and just how far God would go to show us his love for us, eventually we will forget about God entirely. And this isn't some crazy idea. We already have tons of stories about real people who did just that. They forgot about God and, eventually over time, they kind of lost their way.

In my lifetime, there used to be laws against Sunday shopping, because everyone needed a rest and to get refreshed. Going to church was part of that for most people because it made you do something entirely different than the rest of your week. Now, we are on a constant treadmill of activity. We don't know how to stop. The result is that our anxiety and our sadness and our confusion about what's right and wrong is going up and up. We see it in our young people especially.

The Grindstone is an anonymous poem about this phenomenon. It's based on the expression "Keeping your nose to the grindstone." It goes like this:

If you keep your nose to the grindstone rough,

And hold it down there long enough,

You will soon conclude that there are no such things, as a brook that babbles or a bird that sings.

Of these three things will your world compose,

Just you, the stone, and your ground down nose.

Colossians

St. Paul tells us this morning that we have to keep looking up to heaven. If you have been raised with Christ see the things that are above. Set your mind on the things that are above. Stop looking at the created things and, at least every once in awhile, maybe on Sundays(?), look up at the creator. Look up from the natural

to the supernatural. Look up from the physical to the spiritual. Look up from this world to the things that are above.

Acts

So today we remember why we need to take a rest every seven days. Today we remember what God has done for us. We read the bible accounts of how all the prophets testified that there would be a messiah, a saviour for his people. He would be anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. And then we read from eyewitness after eyewitness, that Jesus was that saviour. He went about doing good. They put him to death. God raised him and allowed him to appear. His friends ate and drank with him. He commanded us to preach and testify that he is the one ordained by God. Everyone who believes him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. And that's what I am doing today, so I won't forget, and that's what WE are doing today, so we won't forget.

John

We don't want to forget that, on Easter morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene, a friend of Jesus, came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. When she told the others, Peter and John went out for a run together. Well, not just out running, but racing towards the tomb where Jesus had been laid. But John outran Peter. Why is that? Yes, Peter had stopped doing his cardio at the gym. So John got there first, but Peter came after and went in and saw that Jesus was gone and the cloths were neatly rolled up. And as we go through Easter season we will hear of story after story, more and more witnesses all telling the same story: He IS alive like he said he would be. He HAS appeared to us. Now we remember all the things he told us and the things he did before he died and now they all make sense.

The Meaning of Easter

A teacher told me once, that she was explaining to her Grade four class how Jesus dying on the cross saves us from our sins. One of her students put his hand up to ask a question about that. His question was, "How would that help?" And, when she thought about it, she had a hard time thinking of a good enough answer for

the boy. It was clear that it wasn't as easy to come up with something as I had thought.

But, now I know how to answer the question. That answer is a story about another boy named Nathaniel. He was a regular boy who loved life. He had a great family, even if he did argue with his brother and sister sometimes. The thing about Nathaniel was that he absolutely loved to play with his friends, outside when the weather was good enough, but sometimes inside with his toys or games.

He also liked meals with his family because there was a good feeling there. His mother, and sometimes his father, were good cooks. But Nathaniel's biggest problem is that he would get so wrapped up in playing before meals that he wouldn't hear his mother call him for supper. Or, if he did hear her, he would say, "Ok, mom, I'll be right there, and then forget.

His parents thought he might grow out of this behaviour, so they were pretty tolerant. But even they grew exasperated and eventually had to tell him that there would be consequences if he kept being disrespectful in that way. So, one day when Nathaniel was again very late coming in for dinner, his father said to him, look, son, this is what is going to happen. The next time you are really late for supper after your mother calls you, you will not get what everyone else has. You will find on your plate on plain piece of bread and a glass of water and nothing else. Do you understand? Yes, of course Nathaniel said and promised that he wouldn't disregard his mother again.

And it didn't happen for two days but, on the third day, he got so wrapped up in the game he was playing with friends outside he forgot his promise and came in way after his mother called him. And there was everyone eating one of his favourite meals and he was so hungry he went to go to his seat and was shocked to find just the piece of bread and a glass of water.

He sat down almost in tears and looked at his plate, too ashamed to look at the others. Then he just noticed his father's hand come up from behind the table. Was he going to hit him? He had never done that before but maybe that's how

angry he was. But, instead, he reached over and took Nathaniel's plate and moved it towards himself, and put his own plate of delicious food in front of Nathaniel. He was so surprised he didn't know what to do. Then his father spoke: Nathaniel, you are my son whom I love. I would do anything for you. I would die for you. But today, I will eat your supper and you can eat mine. I will take your punishment for disrespecting your mother and your family. But please don't forget this day and what has happened.

Like that boy's father, God did something different than we could have expected. And, if we let it, our lives will never be the same again. If you don't look up, you won't know what's up there that might change YOUR Life.

So let me ask you- isn't it possible that the God who brought everything into being, the God who gave us life, not because he needed us but so we could share in some way in his life - Isn't it believable that that God would do the unexpected and say to us "I will take the punishment for every one of your sins, for every single time you have hurt someone in any way." What I ask is that you don't forget, that as often as you come to mass, you do it to remember me.

Call To Action

Today is the big Easter day when God asks each of us: If you are afraid of me, how can I comfort you when you are sad or lonely? If you won't come close to me, how can I show you how much I love you as my beloved son or daughter? If you won't spend time with me, how can I help you learn to love more deeply. How can I tell you about what is true and good and beautiful if you believe the lies about me that I don't exist or that I don't care or that there is something wrong with believing in God?

God's children, do you know how much you are loved? Do you know the meaning for why you exist and why YOUR life matters? Today is the Big Easter day to say to God: I don't want to forget that you died for my sin. You took my punishment and that you will never forget me. Please help me to do whatever it takes so that I will never forget.