

Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Easter - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Acts 2: 36-41 "God has made him both Lord and Messiah. Repent and be baptized in his name. "

Psalm 33 "Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who hope in his steadfast love."

John 20: 11-18 "Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

It's Easter Time - Now What?

Introduction

What are we going to do and think about during all that time we spent praying, fasting and almsgiving? At one time, I had a pastor who gave up smoking for Lent. On Easter morning after he had processed out and was greeting people after mass, he would do so with one hand while ecstatically puffing on a cigarette with the other. I think he must have been lighting it on his way down the aisle during the recessional hymn.

We may as well admit it right away. Many of us were so used to thinking about Jesus suffering and death that we may have a hard time fully recognizing and accepting his resurrected glory. We did such a great job, with the grace of God, at entering into the penitential season that we may find ourselves not quite ready to let ourselves celebrate for 50 days.

Gospel of John

The Gospel passage takes us back to just before that new life showed itself. It is the Holy Saturday experience after an unexpected and terrible loss. What emptiness! I know a person who lost someone close to her quite suddenly. She explains that she was so devastated that she truly believed her heart would physically break and she would actually die because the pain was so great. But that didn't happen and, at some point, she had to get up and start doing the ordinary things of everyday life.

Mary Magdalene represents for us that experience. She is the first to get up, go to the tomb, on the first day of the week, and start doing what needed to be done.

But, horror of horrors, the tomb is empty. Someone has taken away what little she had left. They have stolen his body. All she can do is simply break down and weep at her overwhelming feeling of loss. So, when the angels who are there, and even the resurrected Jesus himself, ask her why she is weeping, all she can say through her tears is, "They have taken away my Lord!"

We might ask why she didn't recognize him. Was it because it was just too unbelievable a thing and her mind could not adjust? Was it because his resurrected and glorified state was so dramatically different from the broken and bloodied Jesus they had last witnessed?

Whatever the reason, it was hearing him speak her name that made the difference in her. That's powerful, isn't it? To hear one's name called by the one who gave us our name, our identity, our being, is that most affirming of all sounds. But Mary didn't get to stay in that state very long. Immediately her task became: Tell my brothers. Tell the others. I am not dead. I am alive.

Acts

From there, we jump the time leading up to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Where there was only emptiness and loss, there is power in the preaching of the Apostles to "cut to the heart." Peter begins to live out his leadership role. He has certainly recovered from the experience of having denied Jesus and is now powerfully proclaiming the Gospel: "You killed him, this man who was Lord and Messiah." And the people listening to Peter ask in desperation, "what should we do?"

That's the transformative moment for them and for us. Repent. Be baptized or, for us, live out your Baptism. Receive forgiveness. Enter into the promise. Be prepared to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Integration

All three readings emphasize the authority of God and that same authority resting on Jesus the Saviour. For the psalmist, The plans of the Lord stand firm forever. For Peter it is the declaration: "God has made him Lord and Messiah." For Mary,

at first: "They have taken away my Lord." Jesus is buried in a garden tomb. Mary wonders if the angel might be the caretaker of that place- the gardener. Whereas the Garden of Eden was where life was created by that Lord, now in a garden, life has been recreated in that same Lord. She can say with conviction: "I have seen the Lord."

Call To Action

Seeing Jesus is of supreme importance in post resurrection faith, but it goes beyond that. Our lives must be different than before if that resurrected life is to be transformative for us and the world.

Should we stop praying now that Lent is over? Of course not, but now our prayer should include the desire of our hearts to live in the joy of that first Easter, even if our circumstances haven't changed. Should we stop fasting? On the one hand, we should feast on days that we used to fast. On the other hand, if we have begun a healthier physical or spiritual discipline during Lent, perhaps we can keep that going in some way. Shall we stop almsgiving? No, but now our giving could come from a newfound freedom as the Lord has helped us at least begin to break the hold of our former attachments.

Mostly, though, let us every day live in some way such that those who observe us will know that we have seen the Lord.