

Homily For Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Year I
St Peter's 8:30 am Mass - March 24, 2023

Wisdom 2:1 ,12-22, Psalm 34:16-22, John 7:1,2,10,25-30

Where Does He Come From?

Introduction

Dramatic irony is when the audience knows something that the actors don't. In the gospels we constantly see how the disciples don't know what we know about their own rabbi, their master and teacher. They try to understand because they have come to love him. It's just the limits of their minds. Then there are those who are directly opposed to Jesus. Their minds are clouded by mistrust, by pride, by jealousy. That doesn't necessarily make them wicked, but it means they are influenced by wicked things. Then there are those who are totally committed to wickedness.

Wisdom

Chapter Two of the Book of Wisdom describes for us a stunningly accurate image of the righteous man who is “inconvenient” to the wicked because he “opposes their actions” and who “professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a child of the Lord.” It goes on “his manner of life is unlike that of others, talks of God as his father ... Let us test him with insult and torture so that we may find out how gentle he is and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death.” On and on it goes describing almost exactly what the wicked will do to the saviour, the one from God, who takes on all sin, all wickedness on himself.

We are confronted by this brutal reality in our own liturgical year, in our observance of the Passion of our Lord. Catholics almost always have the tortured body of Jesus on the cross. It is too much to bear for those with sensitive hearts. I feel it in myself when I hear of the brutality against innocent and prayerful Christians throughout the world. We hear of it in the murder of all of the most innocent, even the elderly and children in the womb.

John

In the passage from the Gospel of John we also see what those around Jesus do not. At the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles, they were remembering their time in the desert when God provided for them. Each morning, Levitical priests drew water from the pool of Siloam carried it in procession into the Temple, and poured it out as a libation next to the altar of sacrifice. And yet, they have with them in their midst the one who is living water for the world.

Also at this festival, giant candelabras burned in the sanctuary that illuminated the temple courts. Dancers with flaming torches processed through the temple amid singing and music. John tells us one chapter later that Jesus refers declares: "I am the light of the world." They have this light with them.

In today's Gospel we reflect on the confusion about the identity and mission of Jesus Christ. As the people come face to face with Jesus, there are misunderstandings and presumptions about who He is, how He will or will not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies and what He will accomplish. Assumptions and judgments lead to frustration and anger. So it is in every age: confusion over faith in Christ and Church teaching sparks controversy and religious disintegration. There was a question about where Jesus came from. Two traditions regarding the birth and origin of the Messiah circulated in ancient Judaism. One is that he would be manifested to the world only as an adult. The other is that he would come from Bethlehem in accordance with the Prophecy of Micah 5:2.

The irony is that both are true of Jesus. His heavenly origin in the Trinity is unknown to his audience, as is his birth in Bethlehem as a baby boy. In the Church we have come to understand the fullness of divinity and the fullness of humanity in Jesus Christ. Jesus response is that he comes from God. They are thinking earthly origin but Jesus talks about heavenly knowledge which he has been professing.

Jesus cuts through the confusion by identifying Himself as "sent by the One who is true." John is very clear that Jesus is in charge of the situation. No one touches

him because the time has not yet come for Him to fully reveal His identity and mission. This comes up in another place where they wonder why Jesus wants to go to Jerusalem. Doesn't he remember that they wanted to kill him there? His response is stern: "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord."

Holy Week is very soon. Those who are ready to walk the journey are again going to be plunged into the mystery of how and why the Son of God is killed by wicked people, but also by wickedness itself. He will long for it with all His heart: "There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!"

Call To Conversion

When the time was right, Jesus knew that His hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. "He loved His own in the world and He loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). That Friday, our Redeemer shall hand over into the Father's hands His spirit and, as of that moment, His mission shall become the mission of the Church and of all its members, with Jesus by our side through the Holy Spirit.