

Homily for Easter Tuesday 2020

I want to have us think about two gardeners today. The first gardener was named Adam. The second named Jesus. The biblical story begins in the Garden of Eden where God entrusts to Adam this amazing responsibility of naming the animals, tending to the flowers and plants and living a life of marital grace and bliss with Eve. The one thing that is essential for Adam and Eve so that they can live forever a life of grace is the need for them to remember that the garden is God's and they are his gardeners. They are to care for all that God has made. They are to live a life of trusting obedience, listening to God, caring for the creatures and plants and honouring one another as the first married couple.

But then enters the serpent who tells them a lie. Stop listening to God, take over, do what you want with the garden. You can actually decide to make it your own, be like God and then Eden will really be a paradise! Sadly they listened to this lie and rather than experiencing paradise, all hell broke loose. Adam and Eve started accusing and fighting with each other, the pain of child birth was intense and the ground bore weeds and thistles. These curses came to characterize their daily struggle and they were eventually expelled from the garden.

Now think with me about the second gardener. He had gone to another garden on Holy Thursday. This garden was called Gethsemane and the gardener's name Jesus. Unlike Adam, Jesus say,

Father I know doing your will is going to be excruciating and it will lead to my death. But whatever it takes, I will say yes to you and your will.

And we know what happened. Jesus confronted the evil orchestrated by the enemy of the human soul, that ancient serpent, also known as the devil. And in so doing he allowed us to be restored to a relationship with God where we can celebrate that God can be God and we don't have to take control and be in charge.

One person who discovered this in her life was Mary Magdalene. St Luke tells us that at one time in her life she had been possessed by seven demons. Imagine what this must've been like for her. A life filled with confusion, deception, lies, always being pulled one way and then another. Seven voices saying to her, "you don't need God.... you can be God!" It was tearing her apart. But then she met Jesus and he delivered her from this chaos.

And now it is Easter Morning. Mary goes to the tomb overwhelmed with grief because the one who put her life and in order was now dead! But wait, as she approaches the tomb and looks in, Jesus' body is not there, but in its place there are two angels. They ask why she is weeping and as she explains, because they have taken away my Lord, she turns. And there right at the entrance of the tomb is a man who she thinks is the gardener. And in a very true sense he is. For Jesus is the gardener that Adam wasn't. Jesus is the gardener who did not give into the devil but overcame him on the cross. Jesus is the gardener who offers all of us the true and eternal paradise, which is not Eden but heaven. Jesus is the gardener who here addresses this grieving woman by name, "Mary".

To which she responds: "Rabboni", which is the Hebrew word for teacher. Now her tears are ones of joy because she knows that the devil will never have the final word, Jesus will. She knows that because he has risen from the dead she has a big brother who says:

"Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

What does all this mean for us? We too live in the same world Mary lived in where the power the evil wants to distort our lives, confuse us and leave us feeling lost and alone in the world. But because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, there is a greater power, it is the love of God at work in our Church, the love of God at work in our souls..... Who also calls us by name to know that we are his brothers and sisters and brothers and sisters one to another. We truly do have a Father in Heaven who wants us to live each day in this world trusting in him, listening to him as we grow in saying with Mary, Jesus you are "Rabboni". It is your life, your death, your resurrection and your teaching that help me to make sense of my life. And so he says, don't try to hold on to me. Don't just stay here but go forth from this Mass to live your lives each and every day with an understanding that everything you do is done in light of my Resurrection. This will give us the courage to live trustingly and obediently so that we imitate more fully the gardener Jesus as we say "Father, thy will be done".