

Homily For Friday of the Third Week of Easter - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - April 19, 2024

Acts 9:1-20 "Saul, breathing threats ... heard a voice saying: 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting .'"

Psalm 117:1-2 "Go out to all the world and tell the Good News. "

John 6:52-59 "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me."

Entrance Antiphon: *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honour, alleluia.*

Collect: *Grant we pray, almighty God, that we who have come to know the grace of the Lord's resurrection, may ourselves rise to newness of life.*

He Lives With Us

Introduction

Fr. Jim Nisbett from California tells what it is like to live in community with other priests and brothers. Some of those people, he says, are very hard to live with and getting along day by day can be very difficult. All of the personality types are there and all of the ordinary human conflicts occur. He then tells some of the stories of those difficult personalities. Then he considers that, out of the love that we are all called to, he could imagine dying for even those difficult people. What he finds harder than that is having to live in harmony with them day after day.

Then Fr. Nisbett relates this experience to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. He says that, while it is important that Christ died for us on the cross, he is much more impressed that Christ lives with us in the Eucharist. Yes, he took on our sin when he suffered and died. But now, while we remain sinners - redeemed sinners but still sinners - he does not abandon us because of our weakness, what we call concupiscence, the tendency to sin. He does not abandon us but offers us his flesh and blood every time we come to mass.

The Bread of Life

On Good Friday, we reflected deeply on the Jesus who suffered and died for us. But at this point in the season of the Resurrection, in these passages we are invited to reflect on the Jesus who lives with us.

There is nothing in the Gospel so clear, so emphatic and so definite as these statements of Jesus, that we are to eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood. If we do not take the Holy Communion we cannot have life. Saint John Paul II wrote about this: "The Eucharist is too big a gift for there to be any ambiguities, any confusions or reductions in its meaning." This food is called communion with him." We receive Holy Communion to remain united to him, to think like Him, to speak like Him, to love like Him. No other religion has a similar initiative. It is God Himself who descends to us to live with us in this great mystery. "The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: 'Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'. (CCC #1384)

Acts of the Apostles

That Eucharist, that Jesus, is the same Jesus whom Saul met on his road to Damascus to arrest Christians. He was so thrilled with the victories at Jerusalem, especially the stoning of Stephen, that the zeal he had for God's law was transferred to this persecution. He was absolutely convinced that it was a godly thing to stamp out this sect. You can understand this because, if Jesus was not the Messiah foretold in all of the Hebrew Scriptures, then it was a real threat to true religion and the worship of God. In that sense, Saul was not the enemy of faith. He was its protector.

But when he fell to the ground, he met Jesus. He heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Jesus didn't ask him why he was persecuting his disciples. He made it clear that to persecute the disciples is to persecute Jesus himself. Saul asked him "Who are you, Lord?" So that is interesting. Right away he knows that this is the Lord. The reply came, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Jesus and his Church are one.

A light from heaven flashed all around Saul. It tells us that though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. That's the condition of most of the world around us. The light of God is flashing all around us, but most of the world cannot see it. That's the world we live in. That is why we are persecuted. Jesus is the true light from heaven, but most cannot not see him, not because he is invisible, but

because the light from God, all around them was useless to them in their spiritual blindness.

Anyone who says, why doesn't God show himself, then I will believe. We know this is a lie. Signs of God are all around but people refuse to believe. Saul was kind of like this. He saw the signs and wonders but refused to believe they were from God. The difference is that Saul really was seeking the truth about God. So, when he met Jesus, the truth himself, his life was changed. The only sign that matters is to meet Jesus. Immediately he began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God.

St. Catherine of Siena (April 29)

St. Catherine of Siena is sometimes called the Saint of the Eucharist. Her feast day is a week from Monday, when we will not have mass here at St. Peter's. In Catherine's day, it was very unusual to receive the Eucharist on a daily basis — one really had to have permission in order to do so, and most times it was denied. Catherine, however, received very many mystical graces in the Eucharist. So great was her profound love of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visions and ecstasies often lasting 3-4 hours took place at Communion. Many priests later attested to it. In fact, her spiritual director/confessor, Fr. Raymond of Capua, tells how she was given permission by Pope Gregory XI to have a priest at her disposal to absolve her and administer Communion to her whenever and wherever she liked."

Call To Conversion

What shall we do today to enter more deeply into this great mystery? Last evening, right here in this sanctuary, we talked about this very passage in the Gospel. The children were very attentive. Many of them I think could sense the light of truth flashing around them. Let us do the same. Let us, poor weak creatures that we are, make ourselves ready to receive him who died for us, and now is asking if he can live with us.