

Homily for the 3rd Sunday of Easter

Well, here we are – the 3rd Sunday of Easter. All the Easter egg hunts are over. The chocolate is nearly coming to an end. The flowers in the church are definitely starting to wilt. And yet despite these visible realities, we are nonetheless still in the midst of the Easter season – and will be until we celebrate Pentecost on May 20th. So, why do we need to celebrate the Easter season for so long then? Well, one reason is because the Paschal Mystery is the central tenant of our faith. In other words, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus is **so important for us** that we need to celebrate it for 50 days!

Now for us, some 2,000 years later, we're familiar with these events – we've heard about them Sunday after Sunday and year after year. But this was just not the case for the first disciples. And we get a taste of the roller coaster ride they must have gone through in our Gospel today. We hear, that Jesus came and "stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?" Remember, they were hoping that Jesus was the Messiah. But once He was crucified, they became utterly confused – like sheep without a shepherd. And now all of the sudden, He's back in their midst?!

Now, realizing their disbelief of “How can all of this be possible?”, Jesus assures His disciples in several ways that He’s not a ghost. First, He shows them His hands and his feet, where the wounds from the nails were obviously still visible. And then if that weren’t enough, He eats a piece of baked fish right before their eyes. Certainly a ghost wouldn’t be able to do that!

Jesus wanted His disciples to know that He was truly there – in the flesh – in His resurrected body. He wanted them to be able to truly identify Him as the man they had followed for years. And yet despite this intention of Jesus, this is not His ultimate goal. He’s not just appearing to them to say, “Hey look, I’m no longer dead. I’m really alive. So let’s pick up where we left off”. Rather, He wants to bring to fulfillment the mission He was sent to accomplish.

St. Luke tells us, “Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, ‘Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’” In other words, Jesus wanted to shift them from the human events of His own suffering and death, and now resurrection, to the reason He did all this in the first place: namely for the forgiveness of sins and the promise of new and eternal life, and for this to be proclaimed to all the world.

My friends, this is why Easter is so important for us. We don't just celebrate the historical reality of Jesus' triumph over death. Rather even more, we celebrate the ongoing reality that through His Paschal Mystery, we have been saved from sin and given a new lease on life – with the hope of achieving nothing less than everlasting life with God. This is what we mean by the Good News. Jesus has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves – save us. But, this salvation isn't a magic “poof” and then one day at the end of our lives we'll just be in heaven. Rather, salvation is a process, a journey, which we're living out each day, that ultimately leads to heaven. Through this process, the Holy Spirit helps us become more like Jesus so that we're truly ready to live in heaven with our Father for all eternity.

Outside of our participation in the sacraments, prayer, and other devotions, the very life and activity of our parish is also meant to help us grow in our “journey of salvation”.

After Mass today, as you probably know, our Ministry Fair will take place downstairs.

The Pastoral Council and the coordinators and members of our many parish ministries and organizations have been working very hard to make this something truly special.

I want you to come to the Ministry Fair so much that I'm not even going to be at the front steps of the church after Mass. I'll be greeting you in the social hall instead. Please enter through the main social hall doors, where you'll be welcomed. Then you'll get to peruse the various table displays, enjoy mingling with your fellow parishioners, and enjoy the delicious finger food prepared for everyone. See you downstairs after Mass! God bless you.