

## Homily-ThirdSundayofEaster09

### Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Two weekends ago we celebrated the new life which broke into the world through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Last weekend we continued to celebrate the new life of Easter and the gift of Reconciliation that comes through the resurrection of Christ. This weekend we continue to celebrate the gift and message of reconciliation.

Today we hear the Gospel of Luke proclaimed. In the Gospel account, Jesus has just journeyed with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. He has listened to the doubts of the disciples and explained the Scriptures to them and broke bread with them. They recognized their risen Savior in the breaking of the bread. While the two disciples are still talking about their encounter with the risen Lord, Christ appears to the disciples. The disciples are afraid. In seeing Christ they feel that they are seeing a ghost. The risen Lord shows the disciples his hands and feet and invites the disciples to touch his risen body. He goes as far as to ask to eat with his disciples.

Jesus shows the disciples his hands and feet is to convince them that the risen Jesus is the same Jesus who was crucified and who still bears the marks of this on his body, though he is real and alive. Jesus is not just a memory that lives on, nor is he a haunting ghost; instead he is truly alive and tangible.

The Gospel that we hear proclaimed reminds us that we must see Christ as present in the flesh and bones of this community. Just as the apostles are called to not fear in the presence of the risen Christ so we are not to fear in his presence as Christ is truly present.

The consistent message of the risen Lord is “Do not be afraid.” And “Peace be with you.” The Lord upon whom the disciples relied is now with them in a new way but in a way that is no less real. Luke shows us the reality of Jesus’ presence and its difference from his former presence.

For Luke, Jesus is present to the disciples in a different way after the resurrection. We are to have faith that Jesus is with us in a veiled but real way. Do we have faith in the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of our concerns and doubts?

We need to hear this message of the Lord Jesus that he is with us in the midst of our losses and sorrows. We each encounter loss and sorrow in our lives. For some we experience the pain of the loss of a spouse, or the loss which comes with a move to a new city. Many of us are experiencing economic losses as we see our investments diminish. For some of us health issues cause fear and pain. In the midst of transition and feeling alone Christ continues to be with us in a new but real way.

## FORGIVENESS

The theme of forgiveness permeates the readings. Peter says to the crowd in Acts 3:19 “Therefore, reform your lives! Turn to God, that your sins may be wiped away.” Peter calls the crowd to repentance. Immediately linked to the affirmation that the Messiah must suffer is the invitation to repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is the only adequate response to God’s gift of new life, offered in restored relationship with risen Christ. Witnessing to this love and power begins at home (Jerusalem), then radiates out “to all the nations.” The Book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that the apostles were called to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

The call to the apostles is our call as well. We are called to both preach and live conversion. We must bring this message to all. AS WITNESSES WE ARE CALLED TO BE AUTHENTIC WITNESSES TO THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD AND TO CALL OTHERS TO CONVERSION. As followers of Jesus we like the apostles must preach repentance (*metanoia*) for the forgiveness of sins so that all might be saved.

Along with peace, forgiveness is a gift of the risen Christ. The appearance of the risen Christ brings the gift of forgiveness to the disciples. All of the disciples left Jesus. Peter denied Jesus. The peace of the risen Christ brought release from shame and failure of the first disciples of Jesus which transformed them into missionaries and martyrs. Christ offers this same gift of forgiveness to us in the midst of our sin.

## POPE’S JUBILEE MESSAGE OF FORGIVENESS

To help us understand the repentance to which we are called I would like to turn to the homily of the Holy Father on the first Sunday of Lent in 2000. John Paul II said, “Before Christ who out of love, took our guilt upon himself, we are all invited to make a profound examination of conscience. One of the characteristic elements of the Great Jubilee is what I described as the “purification of memory”. As the Successor of Peter, I asked that “in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters.” Today, the First Sunday of Lent, seemed to me the right occasion for the Church, gathered spiritually around the Successor of Peter, to implore divine forgiveness for the sins of all believers. Let us forgive and ask forgiveness.

The Pope asked pardon for the divisions which have occurred among Christians, for the violence some have used in the service of the truth and for the distrustful and hostile attitudes sometimes taken towards the followers of other religions, especially Judaism. “Let us confess, even more, our responsibilities as Christians for the evils of today. We must ask ourselves what are our responsibilities are regarding atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, and violations of the right to life, disregard for the poor in many countries.

He goes on to say, "Let us forgive the sins committed by others against us. Countless times in the course of history Christians have suffered hardship, oppression and persecution because of their faith. Just as the victims of such abuses forgave them, so let us forgive as well....The acceptance of God's forgiveness leads to the commitment to forgive our brothers and sisters and to be reconciled with them."

Not only does God forgive our sins but God gives us the grace which allows us to be able to turn from our sins. God gives us the grace and strength to change.

We cannot be a people who preach conversion without being a people of conversion.

### **CONCLUSION**

This Sunday we celebrate the risen Christ who is with us and who offers us his peace. In the midst of the fear and joys of our lives we know that Christ is with us in a new and real way. The Christ that is with us to calm our fears calls us out on mission just as he called his apostles out on mission. Central to our mission is both preach and live out conversion.

Today's readings call us to give thanks for our God's gift of forgiveness. It also calls us to reflect on our need to receive that gift. What sin(s) do I need to turn from in order to fully accept God's salvation? To whom do I need to turn in order to fully accept God's salvation?