

Homily of Third Sunday of Easter of Year A 2020

We have been praying since Easter, that we may experience Jesus and the transforming power of the resurrection of Jesus. We remember how Peter, crippled by fear, denied Jesus three times. Peter said in his third denial, "I do not know the man" (Matthew 26:74).

Before the appearance of Jesus to the apostles, Peter and the other apostles locked themselves up in a room "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). But the first reading shows how Peter was transformed by the power of Jesus' resurrection. After Peter had encountered the Risen Lord, he was delivered from his fear. He was, then, ready to die for Jesus. He began to proclaim the Risen Lord without fear. He was not afraid to accuse the Jews, openly, of killing Jesus and cautioned them to repent from their sinful ways. The story of Peter is a story of hope. It is a story that encourages us. We pray that as Easter people, we are transformed and overcome all the things that are holding us down. Amen.

The second reading reminds us that as Easter people, we realize that we have been ransomed from our futile conduct with the blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb. Each one of us need to examine himself or herself to know the futile conduct or conducts that hold us down in such a way that we are unable to witness Jesus as we should.

We read in the Gospel how two of Jesus' disciples, in disappointment and in despair, were heading back to their village, Emmaus. For them, to have left everything and followed Jesus, perhaps, for three years had ended up as a waste of time. That was why they were downcast. Then, Jesus met them on their way. Three major events took place. First, Jesus fed the two men with the Scriptures to burn their hearts. Second, Jesus had a Eucharistic meal with them. The Eucharist opened their eyes, and they recognized Jesus. Third, they were empowered by the encounter with Jesus. "So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem..." Remember that the men had advised 'the stranger' not to continue his journey, but to stay with them because it was nearly evening, and the day almost over. In other words, it was too dangerous to continue the journey at that time. However, after encountering Jesus, they were empowered and they traveled back to Jerusalem that night to join the apostles and the other disciples. They were no longer afraid of the dangers of the night. This incident tells a lot about the power of the word of God and the power of the Eucharist.

One other lesson we need to learn from the two disciples is the essence of hospitality. Without being asked, they invited 'the stranger' to stay with them because it was getting late. They provided him accommodation and meal. They did not know that their hospitality was to Jesus. Remember the words of Jesus, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). The writer of the Book of Hebrews teaches us, "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). Hospitality opens up doors and windows of blessings.

As a priest, I have been asked many questions regarding the hardship we are facing due to Covid 19 Pandemic. Questions such as, "Is God punishing us?" "Is God angry with us?" "Is God not hearing our prayers?" And some other questions. Many of us are like Cleopas and his friend, frustrated and downcast, giving up hope, and returning to 'Emmaus.' Last week we read that Jesus appeared to his frightened disciples who locked themselves up in a room. He blessed them with peace and breathed on them the Holy Spirit. Today, Jesus appeared to the two men who were frustrated and downcast, and empowered them. Jesus does not abandon us.

There is no doubt that we are sick, grieving, frightened, frustrated, downcast, despair, brokenhearted, confused, disappointed, hungry, and upset. Although we may not know it, Jesus is walking with us. May he grant healing to the sick, consolation to the grieving, strength to the frightened, guidance to the frustrated, joy to the downcast, hope to the despair, courage to the brokenhearted, insight to the confused, delight to the disappointed, food to the hungry, and peace to the upset. Amen.

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