

Fourth Sunday of Lent - (3/2/08)

Continuing from last week's reading on the personal encounter with Jesus (the woman at the well) and His desire to move into our personal lives to heal any brokenness, today's gospel of the healing of the man born blind reminds us that we must be careful how we interpret encounters with God and His church. The Pharisees did not like that Jesus healed on the Sabbath when no work was allowed. They judged that the healing was a disobedience to God's law. But they failed to distinguish between good and evil in the healing. Instead of rejoicing with the healed man, they questioned him to find some reason to attack Jesus.

You may sometimes hear me speak about Protestantism in a critical way. I firmly believe that, although reform is always needed in the church and in each of us, the proper way Jesus would want us to work on reform is from within the church. Luther and other Protestant reformers were too impatient, too proud to allow time for the reforms to work from within. They failed to respect Jesus' prayer at the last supper, "I pray...so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you..." John 17:21-22. But, that does not mean that Protestants, as well as people of other religions, do not love God and do good things in His name. They do, and we should honor the good that anyone does, while always praying that all Christians may one day be united. Unfortunately, as a world we are still going in the wrong direction, with more division in the Body of Christ each year.

Individually, we must be careful we do not judge others (although we always must judge behavior). We judge actions so that we can learn from them and teach others the good things of God's will for us. But only God can judge a person. Each of us is a pilgrim on the road of life, given instruction from God down through the ages through His prophets and Church. Each generation we must apply God's teachings to new circumstances in a way that honors God's will, always keeping our eyes and hearts open to hear God's will. If we do that, we will celebrate with the eyes of faith God's incredible love in our lives and in the world. Amen!

Fifth Sunday of Lent - (3/9/08)

The fifth Sunday of Lent moves to a universal concern, life and death. Jesus comes to Bethany after Lazarus has been dead for four days. He delays in coming so that his disciples will see His last great work before His passion. His disciples will need that strength before undergoing their own trials of doubt during the suffering and death of Jesus. They won't understand at the time, but after the resurrection they will remember and see the raising of Lazarus as a foreshadowing of Jesus' own rising. The major difference though is that Lazarus was resuscitated to the same human life he had before he died whereas Jesus is resurrected to a completely new level of life in the Spirit, a life not bound by space and time.

The resurrection means nothing to those who have no faith. But with faith comes a deepening awareness that the universe, and my own individual life, is changed forever. We still live in time but with a much greater awareness that what we do in time for the Lord with our lives is extremely important. We are not like livestock in a pen waiting to be slaughtered. Rather, we live in awareness that we are baptized into a life with Christ in the Spirit even as we continue to live our normal lives. Our lives become a sharing in the life of Christ who came that we 'might have life, and have it to the full.' The fullness of our life in time comes from serving the Lord and one another with our lives, with the different gifts the Lord has given us. As long as we have faith in the resurrection of Jesus and our future resurrection, life takes on new and poignant meaning. We no longer fear death completely. May our faith free us from all the constraints and fears that keep us from being Christ-like to others. May we find the fullness of Life Jesus wishes us to share, beginning here and now, in Longmont, Colorado! Amen!!

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – (3/16/08)

Holy Week begins with the reading of the Passion at all masses on Palm Sunday. The reading sets the stage for the events of Holy Week; Holy Thursday commemorating the Institution of the Eucharist; Good Friday commemorating the suffering and death of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins; Easter Vigil begins the celebration of Christ's triumph over sin and death through His resurrection. As a whole, Holy Week is meant to be a sobering reminder of the depth of Christ's suffering for us. That depth of suffering represents the infinite love of God for us. Jesus willingly gave up His power as God to live with us, to completely identify with our struggles against temptation and evil. Because of the fullness of His humanity, Jesus takes upon Himself all of the sins of our human condition. Because of the fullness of His divinity, Jesus becomes the eternal high priest offering Himself for our salvation.

This week is our final opportunity this Lenten season to reflect on our lives and our response to Jesus' offering for us. Do we really understand how much He suffered for us? Do we really understand how much He loves us? Jesus suffered and died so that each of us could be forgiven our sins and live in the Spirit as His witnesses in the world. Does our daily life reflect our picking up our cross and following Jesus? It is only through our participation in His cross that we can come to the power of the resurrection. May this Holy Week help us to appreciate Jesus' love for each of us, and may it truly be holy for us! Amen!

Easter Sunday - (3/23/08)

Happy Easter! This is the greatest day of the year because we celebrate the Lord's resurrection and triumph over death and sin. Through the power of Christ's death and resurrection we are saved from the consequences of sin, which is spiritual death. Sin cuts us off from God, Grace restores us to God. Easter is the ultimate revelation of God's love in making our salvation possible. As sinful humans, we could not make up for the offense against God by humanity. Only a God-Man could accomplish this, and only if He were perfectly obedient to the Father's will by suffering and dying for us out of Love. This past Holy Week we have been remembering how much Jesus did for us. Now we remember the Grace He won for us. All we have to do is accept it!

We celebrate Easter every day during the Octave of Easter, which is why no other church celebrations occur during this week (The Feast of the Annunciation has been transferred to March 31 this year). And during this week, actually beginning on Good Friday, we are encouraged to pray the novena of Divine Mercy. Pope John Paul II recommended this devotion in 2000 when he named the Sunday after Easter Divine Mercy Sunday. As we celebrate the Lord's love for us in the Resurrection, let us also take the time to pray for those whose souls are most in need of God's mercy. As we have mentioned before, one of the great mysteries is that God chooses to restrict His mercy to the extent that we, both individually and collectively as the Body of Christ on earth, cooperate with it. God relies on our prayers to help save each other. The trust He has in us is truly unbelievable!

We wish you a blessed and holy Easter Season as we grow in our love of neighbor through our prayers. Amen!

Second Sunday of Easter – (3/30/08)

Happy Easter! Again! Liturgically, we celebrate Easter Day for the octave after Easter Sunday. The octave ends today, Divine Mercy Sunday. Pope John Paul II designated the Sunday after Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday to remind us of the great mercy of Jesus in offering His body and blood for the salvation of the world. But there are many people who act as if God's mercy is not necessary in their lives. Today we especially pray for all souls who have turned away from God, that they may open their hearts to God's infinite mercy. Salvation is only possible for those who turn back to God and ask for mercy.

Today as we truly celebrate with joy the unbelievable love of our Lord for us, let us also be mindful of those in need of God's mercy. We have grown in awareness of the physical hunger of people in the world who go without, but the tragedy of those who live in spiritual hunger is much, much greater. Our brothers and sisters need our prayers to help them turn to God. In this time of Easter joy, let us pray that the joy of the risen Lord Jesus may fill our hearts and the hearts of all God's people. May God continue to bless us with Easter joy and peace. Alleluia!