

Third Sunday of Easter – (4/6/08)

The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus meeting with Jesus sets the stage for the early church's proclamation that Jesus is with them in the "breaking of the bread." It's entirely possible that the two disciples were giving up on their discipleship by running away. Yet they were still willing to talk about their dashed hopes with a stranger as they were leaving. Jesus met them in their disappointment and helped restore their faith for the difficult and uncertain journey of discipleship. Their journey is much like ours. We do not fully comprehend what God is doing with our lives, yet we have faith to stay on the journey, sometimes hesitatingly. The Eucharist can become the source of new life and hope for us when we are discouraged.

In the "breaking of the bread" the early followers of Jesus learned to trust that Jesus would always be with them and nourish them for their journey just as God had fed His people for forty years in the desert. If we remember in the Eucharist that it is Jesus Himself that is walking with us, no matter how difficult life gets, we will be able to persevere. Through our perseverance in faith, we will come to an even deeper relationship with the Risen Lord and share His Joy. Alleluia!

Fourth Sunday of Easter – (4/13/08)

There is no other religion in the world that claims that its human founder is God except Christianity. That's what makes Christianity unique. Although our faith accepts that claim, logically speaking the claim is either true or false. If it is false, then individuals may do with their lives as they wish, they may believe or not believe. But if it is true, then every single person on the face of the earth is affected by our faith. Because if it is true, then every other claim of religion is either false or a deviation from the true faith. That is why we speak of our faith as the "true faith." Not that we are responsible for it being true, for our faith is a gift from God. But we have an awesome responsibility to help the world and our neighbors see that Christianity, and especially Catholic Christianity, is the Only "true faith" in the world.

Jesus had a difficult time convincing the Jewish religious establishment that He was the culmination of everything God had promised His people. We Catholics have a difficult time convincing other faiths, even Christians, that the Catholic Church is the ONE church Jesus founded. This does not mean that there are no sinners in the church, either leaders or followers, shepherds or sheep. But it does mean that no other faith can claim to fulfill the will of Christ "that they may all be one." (John 17:21). All disciples have a responsibility to pray for church leaders so that they will conform to Christ's will and be faithful leaders. The church is always in need of reform, both leaders and laity. But this reform must always come from within, without sacrificing the unity of the Body of Christ, even if it takes longer.

Jesus is the only savior of the world, even if followers of other faiths don't know it or accept it. The Truth simply IS. As Catholics we are called to love our neighbors, and therefore we have the primary duty to Christ to spread our faith. We always respect wherever others are on their faith journey, but we also must help them see that Jesus is the gate through whom all must enter. And while we pray for others, we must also pray that we ourselves be faithful so that we do not lose the gift of our faith by neglect. Jesus calls us to conform to His teaching. In return, He offers us His Risen Joy! Amen!

Fifth Sunday of Easter – (4/20/08)

At the beginning of Acts (3:42-47) we hear of the community of believers living in wonderful harmony. Today's reading brings us back to earth with some dissension in the community, dissension caused by tension amid the diversity (Hellenists and Hebrews) of the growing community of faith. We see how Peter and the Apostles resolve this situation by accepting the community's input on the selection of new ministers commissioned to take care of the poor.

The gospel comes at the Last Supper. Jesus is trying to reassure his apostles after He told them he was going to leave them. He promises them that He is going away in order to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and then will come back to take them to Himself. This can have a double meaning, first in that Jesus will come back after the Resurrection to take them to Himself through the giving of the Holy Spirit; and/or second, in that Jesus will prepare a place in heaven for his followers after their death. Both meanings give hope to His disciples.

Jesus also reasserts that He is the Way to the Father, following up on last week's gospel when He tells the Pharisees He is the Good Shepherd and the gate. Jesus speaks this in the Wisdom tradition where there are only two ways, the way of the wise in following God's precepts and the way of the foolish in following anything else before God. Jesus is the only way to the Father and He invites all people to hear His voice and follow Him in obedience to eternal life. May this Easter season open our minds and hearts more to the fullness of Love Christ wishes to offer us through our own cross and resurrection. Alleluia!