

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 31st 2016

An Easter Blessing

Feeling Our Hearts Burn With Hope

Today's first reading begins with people in amazement at a miraculous healing. At first glance, it seems that Peter is pouring cold water on their experience. Isn't it rather strange that he should ask them why they are amazed, when something so spectacular has occurred? Peter is intent on putting this all in context, providing a lesson that would bring them a more complete understanding of the events that had occurred. Amazement based only on the healing of the crippled man would be misplaced; it was yet another lesson that God is at work in their midst, doing something important for them, not merely acting in the life of the crippled man. Hey, wake up and smell the coffee! Jesus was raised for you, first. You are to be a blessing to others. How about that!

Yet in the midst of this larger message, I also note that the crippled man "clung" to Peter and John. This is such a human reaction, reflecting genuine gratitude. We sometimes need to express that with an embrace, with touching. It is good to be human. The Psalm for today really brings this home, and we wish we could embrace God to tell Him thank you for making us and for paying attention to us. It really is something spectacular.

In today's gospel, we have more human reactions. The disciples are startled and terrified at their unexpected encounter with a risen Jesus. Their fear later turned into joy. What a range of emotions! We often experience relief when things turn out better than we anticipated. Why is it that we fear for the worst?

Jesus helps them open their minds to the truth that was emerging from the facts that had unfolded. I note that Jesus requires them to draw upon what they knew already. He was not announcing completely new truths, but helping to unfold the meaning of events that they had been experiencing. In many respects, Peter was trying to do the same thing in the first reading. Perhaps he had learned a few things from Jesus after all!

Jesus was helping them to solve a mystery. We love a good mystery. Isn't it grand when we fit together the pieces of the story and see a deeper plot emerging, in which the details begin to make sense! But to get to that joyous state, we must struggle first. No valleys, no mountains. Struggling can be hard. Sometimes we want someone to tell us the answer so badly! We want to know why! Thanks be to God that He continues to be mindful of our predicament.

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