

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Apr 14th 2013

PRE-PRAYERING

We were introduced into the Christian Way and the Eucharistic Community through rituals or gestures and words. Two weeks ago we re-celebrated a re-new gesture-word in our re-upping through water and the Holy Spirit. At this liturgy we will celebrate again our identity and the identification we receive at the Eucharist.

Living is what grace is about and graceful living is how we proclaim that Jesus has risen. We do not know how Jesus rose, but we do hear how the early apostles rose and lived their faith in the risen Lord. Jesus rose once and by his grace we keep rising from the dusts of failure, shame and self recrimination. We prepare for this celebration by celebrating the reality of our personal and little risings.

REFLECTION

The Gospel for this liturgy is so important for an understanding of John's message and a clearer appreciation of the Easter liturgies, that this Reflection will be centered on these verses. We will feel inspired in the First Reading by our hearing of how Peter and his companions stood up to the authorities who had forbidden them to speak in the name of Jesus. The First Reading from Acts is a continuation of how deeply the apostles trusted in the Spirit and the power of his name. They were proud to have stayed faithful to their having been immersed into Jesus.

The chapter of John's Gospel from which we hear today, is an additional story which was added to summarize the important features of the whole book. After the introductory prologue, we read that Jesus invites his future followers to first "come and see". Coming is being introduced or initiated into the experience of Jesus. Seeing is believing that Jesus is the Christ of God, risen and inviting more belief.

This Gospel replays these two aspects. The coming is the importance for John and his early Christian community of the Sacraments of Initiation. Baptism, Reconciliation, the Eucharist, and Confirmation, are the four steps to the seeing of Jesus. These four Sacraments are the four highlighted events of today's Gospel. They follow the usual sequence of our sacramental system. John or one of his disciples added this Gospel event to make sure we the readers, listeners and followers of Jesus might grow more deeply in our desires to follow Jesus along with Peter. The sacraments of vocation are the ways one who has come and seen will express his or her faith in the Risen Lord.

In John's Gospel, nothing good happens at night, so Peter and the other fishermen, return from their disappointment concerning Jesus, and go backwards. For the sake of the story, they catch nothing, this sets the scene. Guess who appears and when? Jesus shows up at daybreak. This is the repetition of Jesus' first appearance to the followers of John when Jesus invites them to "come and see." Jesus calls to them in their empty boat, they admit their poverty and he fills their boat as did Jesus change water into abundant wine and the bread and fish into abundant food. The response of Peter's hearing that it was the Lord, was to jump into water wrapped in a garment. The symbols we use for the first step in

coming to Jesus in the Christian Community is through jumping or dumping into water and our being clothed in a garment indicating a new form of life. For Peter and for the newly baptized at Easter, this is only a beginning.

The “charcoal” fire is waiting for the disembarked and had some fish and bread baking upon it. Jesus invites them to bring some of the fish he had helped them catch and then invites them to breakfast. This is obviously a liturgy of Eucharistic sharing. Fish were symbols for Jesus in the early Church. They were asked to “Come have breakfast.” Peter draws near to the “charcoal” fire which itself becomes a sacramental symbol.

Peter’s three denials took place in chapter eighteen of John’s Gospel, while he, Peter, was warming himself beside such a fire. Peter is welcomed back through the bread and fish being offered to him and at the same place of his disassociation. Through Baptism the apostles come to find Jesus finding them, calling them, forgiving them and feeding them with himself.

The final sacrament of initiation is Peter’s listening quite clearly to the three probing questions of Jesus. “do you love Me?” There is a dual confirmation here. Jesus is saying that he loves Peter by calling him out of his boat and fruitless fishing, into communion with him. Can Peter hear that! Peter does make his response after listening intently. The Sacrament of Confirmation is primarily not a being strengthened in some doing of works of faith. Rather it is a strengthening of our ability to listen to or distinguish voices. The initiated are confirmed in their listening to Jesus as the Word of God and the Love of God incarnated in that Word. There were voices to whom Peter had listened leading to his denials. Now he is asked to hear what Jesus is asking and saying. The doing of the works of faith will depend on the initiated persons’ ability to discern between the various calls of this world of which one is the Voice of Jesus.

Peter, in this chapter, is initiated through these four Sacraments and then receives the object of this reception. The Gospel opened with a “Come and see” invitation. Peter, and his initiated-followers, now at the end of the Gospel are invited to “follow me.” They have seen and believed and their belief is lived out in following Jesus into the mysteries of his life and theirs.

We are in the season of celebrating our belonging, our being included, our being sacramentally prepared for a deeper following of Jesus. All the Sacraments in the Church are for our going out into life, for this we jumped into the water, were fed, forgiven, had our ears cleaned for better listening. Peter, the other apostles, you and I are initiated into our being sacraments of his love and light in this world. In this Light we do the good things

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” John 20, 30-31

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