

Homily or the 3rd Sunday of Easter

On Palm Sunday this year Fr Luis emailed to say that during the reading of the Passion Narrative a cock was crowing. He didn't say that it was when Peter who had so boldly told Jesus that he was ready to die for him, lied three times that he even knew Jesus. However, the crowing of the cock made Peter realise what he had just done and he broke down in tears.

Fast forward to today's gospel and we have the final resurrection story of this Easter season. They have followed a similar pattern, despondency on the part of the disciples, a lack of recognition when Jesus appears to them, followed by a spark of recognition leading to incredulity and then profound joy at experiencing the risen Jesus. The problem is that the disciples at this stage don't seem to be able to make connections between the different appearances as this final story demonstrates.

Peter and some of the others decided to return to their old way of life. After Jesus had died so did their hopes and there is no suggestion that they thought they had the mission to carry on after Jesus' death. Their way of coping was not only to look backwards but to go backwards, and, as we have just heard they experienced failure, not a single fish caught. Heading back towards shore a distant figure advises them to throw in their nets again, and, to their amazement they bring in a huge catch. This stirs something in the so called Beloved disciples who realise that the distant figure is none other than the Lord. Peter, impetuous as ever, reaches land first and when the others catch up with him they have breakfast around a charcoal fire, bread and fish, reminding them of a previous miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 with its overtones of the Eucharist.

The reading in the Mass sheets ends there, but not in the lectionary, because after the meal Jesus asks Peter, not once, not twice but three times, Do you love me? And three times, with a growing sense of frustration, Peter replies that he does. The three times is not insignificant because Peter had disowned Jesus three times, at least once beside a charcoal fire. We may be tempted to think that this is Jesus teaching Peter a lesson, but it isn't. Why? Because each time Peter professes his love, Jesus gives him a mission to look after and care for his flock, not of lambs and sheep, but of people. And this is what Peter did, as we heard in the first reading. Filled with the Holy Spirit he refuses to be silenced by the Religious authorities of his day, telling them that obedience to God comes before obedience to human beings. He puts his love for Jesus into practice and does so until it costs him his life three decades later in Rome.

Jesus asks the same question of us, more interested in what we can become than any past failures. If we let Jesus through the locked doors of our insecurities and fears we will experience his love for each one of us which will enable us to respond in ways that will put the needs of others before our own, practicing the 'wider we', that will make sure that the Good News of the Gospel will never die.

Bidding Prayers for the 3rd Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

Let us pray with joy to the Father who raised his Son Jesus from the dead and who is now living to intercede for us.

Reader:

We pray for the Church enlightened by the risen Christ – may we be set on fire by the Holy Spirit as we proclaim the wonder of the resurrection.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those whose lives are blighted by the evils of violence and war – may the light of the risen Christ change hearts and minds so that all may live in peace.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who carry the heavy burden of guilt – that they will be encouraged by the risen Christ's words of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Lord in your mercy

We pray for those who have died especially, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid 19 pandemic, for Fred Dale and Anne Senior whose funerals take place this week and Gerard Johnson, Ellen Murphy and Florence McDermott whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary the Mother of the Risen Lord as we say together the Regina Coeli which is at the back of the newsletters,

O Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia! For he whom you did merit to bear, Alleluia! Has risen as he said, Alleluia! Pray for us to God, Alleluia! Rejoice and be glad O Virgin Mary, Alleluia! For the Lord has risen indeed, Alleluia.

Celebrant:

Lord God, grant your people constant joy in this Easter season when we remember with thanksgiving the resurrection of your Son. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen