

HOMILY ~ THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER APRIL 13/14, 2024

*I believe above the storm the smallest prayer
Will still be heard.
I believe that someone in the great somewhere
Hears every word.
Every time I hear a newborn baby cry,
Or touch a leaf or see the sky,
Then I know why I believe.*

I believe in the Resurrection, but the disciples had a hard time believing. Before the Gospel passage that we just heard, Mary Magdala went to Jesus' tomb that first Easter morning, found the stone rolled away and Jesus appeared to her there. She told the disciples in the upper room as Jesus told her to do. Jesus had appeared to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. Jesus explained the Scriptures to them, and they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. In the beginning of the Gospel reading we just heard, Cleopas and his companion just explained all of this to the disciples. Then Jesus appeared to the disciples. They did not believe it was Jesus. They thought it was a ghost. The disciples had to touch him and see that he had flesh and bones; and they still did not believe. He had to eat fish with them, and I am still not sure that they believed. Jesus had to make additional appearances to them.

I can understand why they were slow to believe. There had never been a Resurrection before. This was not a resuscitation; it was a Resurrection to new life. It had never happened before and has not happened since. Do you think they may have wondered if Jesus was mad at them for deserting him when he needed them the most? They must have wondered that if the Resurrection was true, what is this going to mean moving forward. I understand why they were slow to believe, but Jesus kept appearing to them until they believed. It was important that they carry on his ministry and spread the Gospel.

So, do you believe in the Resurrection? What exactly do you believe? I think it is easy to believe that God exists. I see evidence of his presence all over the place. When I see a sunrise or sunset. When I see all of the new life all around us in spring, when the bulbs know to sprout and bloom and when the trees know when to get their leaves. When I see how resilient the world is in spite of all of the things we do to harm the environment. Who gives us life and sustains our lives every day? We are very complicated human beings; and in spite of the hundreds of things that could go wrong every day, we do pretty well every day. This cannot happen just by chance. God must be sustaining all of it.

But do you believe that the historical Jesus has been Resurrected and is living among us? These are some of the more difficult questions. Do you believe that Jesus loves you unconditionally, just the way you are, in spite of all of the crazy things that you have done? Do you believe that you are never alone and that Jesus is guiding you every day? Think about a time in your life when something went horribly wrong at first, and then suddenly things became totally right. Do you believe that Jesus played a hand in that? That is what the disciples experience after the crucifixion. At first things seemed to go horribly wrong, but suddenly they became totally right. Do you believe that we will be raised from the dead, just as Jesus was raised from the dead? Do you believe in life after death? Do you believe that you will be reunited with all of your loved ones in heaven? Do you believe that we are only here a short while in comparison to eternity?

If you believe in the Resurrection. If you believe that you are loved unconditionally, guided every day and never alone. If you believe in life after death and that this world is just a preparation for what is to come. If you believe, maybe you can let go of all of the things that our culture tells us is important and embrace what God is calling you to do. Maybe you can let go of the things that are preventing you from living a life of purpose and meaning. This world is not perfect, but the next one will be.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim