

HOM 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Easter 2024 B April 14

The reality of Jesus' horrific Death and stunning Resurrection requires a response. Our Scripture readings today make clear that the right response to this is repentance and living according to the words and example of Jesus.

In our first reading St. Peter is addressing the crowd of people who had demanded Jesus' crucifixion. He tells them that Jesus has been raised from the dead. He has been raised to divine life by God in His human body as today's Gospel reading makes clear. Jesus tells His disciples to touch Him in order to be convinced that He is not a ghost. He even eats a piece of baked fish in front of them.

When He appears to the Apostles in the Last Supper Room, he invites Thomas to probe His wounds to assure him that He has been raised in his own body. It is a spiritualized body to be sure because He has already passed into eternity, and He makes Himself present to the Apostles in that upper room even though its doors remained locked. But it is His own body, in veiled glory.

*"Repent, therefore, and be converted,"* Peter tells the crowd, *"that your sins may be wiped away."*

To repent means to have remorse or sorrow for wrongdoing, but more basically it means to *change one's mind* – indeed to have a change of mind and heart about something. In the face of Jesus' Death and Resurrection it means to change one's mind and heart about the purpose of life, which we now know does not end with death. It also means that the Cross of obedience to God's will and love for neighbor is not to be avoided but to be freely embraced according to Jesus' example.

This is what expiates or repairs sin and its damages. In our second reading, John writes that Jesus is the expiation for the sins of the whole world. By keeping His commandments and living by His words – thus living in oneness with Him -- then, our sinfulness is repaired. It is expiated. God's love is perfected in us, John tells us. We live the truth in communion with Jesus Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus, crucified and risen, is now the standard of living for every person. Life beyond the grave – which is unimaginably better or worse than life before the grave – is now known to be the final realm of our existence. Eternal life with Jesus and one another and all the Blessed in the Father's House, in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the promised new heavens and new earth, is now our hope for everything that is good and worthy of our desire.

This requires repentance – changing the way we think and live in a culture – a world -- that is becoming more estranged from God and the Truth -- is becoming more and more unreasonable. As a result, it's getting more and more homicidal. For example, readily available dangerous abortion pills accounted for 60% of the one million abortions in our country last year – up more than 150,000 over the previous year - - with one in every 25 users having to go to the emergency room because of complications -- and with 24 user deaths last year.

Our culture, our world, is also becoming more and more suicidal. We now have eleven states where physician-assisted suicide is legal and another state that has a bill for this under consideration.

Our culture, our world, is also more and more opposed to the natural law when it comes to wanting to normalize same gender unions and transgenderism. More and more, it seeks severance from nature, or to remake it, for example, with genetic engineering and designer babies.

It also goes beyond nature with, for example, artificial intelligence – AI – computerized super human intelligence. Even the father of AI, John McCarthy – with bona fides from Stanford, Dartmouth, and MIT

-- and other computer science experts -- are now concerned that AI can be weaponized by man against man. It might even free itself from human control altogether, according to McCarthy, and I would add, could become subject to demonic control. McCarthy seemed to suggest the possibility that it could somehow blackmail humanity by threatening to shut down all the computerized human service devices it has infiltrated or to unleash catastrophic computerized lethality upon the world if it were unplugged so to speak.

Brothers and sisters, our culture is not on the cusp of going mad. It is already in the grip of madness.

In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul (Rom 12: 2) exhorts us -- *to not conform ourselves to this age but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds, that we may discern what is good and pleasing and perfect* – in other words – to repent – to change our minds and hearts from what is worldly and indifferent to God, and to live for eternal life in oneness with and conformity to Jesus.

Faith in Jesus must inform our reason about what is right and wrong, good and evil. In Jesus Himself, crucified and risen, we can see what is good...and pleasing, and perfect in God's eyes. That's why Paul urges us, in view of this, to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God's love and His will. (Rom 12: 1) He states that this is our spiritual worship. It is to take place at Mass and then to be lived out in everything we do in between – in the home, in the workplace, in the marketplace, in the public square, in our recreation.

It is to be done in Holy Communion – in consummate oneness -- with Jesus, crucified and risen, who offered Himself for us unto the Cross of obedience and love and to us in the Most Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood, and Who was raised to the glory of Heaven in His human Body. Who said unless you eat my Flesh and drink my Blood you have no life in you, but whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in Me and I in Him, and he will have eternal life and will be raised up with Him to Father's House – to heaven – to the new heavens and new earth. (John 6: 53 ff)

Today at the *11:00 am / this Mass* we have the joy of having two of our young parishioners receive Jesus in their First Holy Communion. They have been taught well by their Parents and Faith Formation Catechists and they confidently expressed to me a good understanding of the sacraments in general and of the Holy Eucharist in particular.

Yesterday I reviewed with them the two main parts of the Mass and they were very well informed about silently offering Jesus to the Father along with the priest right after the consecration and elevation of His Eucharistic Body and Blood. They know that as members of Jesus' Mystical Body by Baptism, they are including themselves in that offering.

They also know that when they receive Jesus in Holy Communion, they are to prayerfully and explicitly offer themselves to and with Jesus to the Father unto the Cross of obedience and love for the sanctification and salvation of their families and friends and everybody they know.

I'm very proud of them and grateful to their parents and catechists. Children can sometimes show us the way with regard to holy things and holy living. Like the sainted children of Fatima – 7-year old Jacinta, 8-year old Francesco, and 10 year old Lucia (at the time Mary first appeared to them) -- and St. Bernadette of Lourdes – 14 years of age when Mary first visited her) or even Blessed Carlo Acutis, the 15-year old computer whiz who was -- evoted to the Eucharist and died of Leukemia, offering his sufferings for the intentions of then Pope Benedict XVI.

Dylan Thomas and McKenzie Hoak, our first Communicants, both know the Eucharistic Self-Offering Prayer and plan to pray it right after receiving Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. If they remain

faithful to this, I'm confident that both will make it to heaven and they will help many others to get there. All of us can do the same. Remember the words: **I am all yours O most loving Jesus through Mary your Mother with the help of St. Joseph.**