

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (B)
22nd APRIL 2012

Acts 3. 13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2. 1-5; Luke 24.35-48

We are all on a journey. Sometimes it's smooth, other times difficult.

But we are never alone. Not only do we have God with us, but we have each other. Since God lives in us, this should be obvious, but we don't always recognise him. Just like the 2 disciples in the Gospel, who interestingly didn't recognise Jesus until he broke the bread.

During Lent we have reminded ourselves of Jesus' journey, and now we are celebrating his resurrection during Eastertide, the ultimate good news. Smile – Jesus is risen.

There are 3 themes I would like to touch on from today's readings: Faith, Repentance, and Love.

In the first reading Peter tells the Jews they didn't know what they were doing. And how often do we not know what we are doing? It's so easy to quickly react to someone by instinct, if someone is harsh to us we react in kind, then everything escalates. We react before we think – ie before we know what we are doing. That's a small example, but the principle is important. Just as a small fight can break out between friends through mis-understanding (lack of knowing), so wars can start between countries simply because their leaders focus may be wrong, they don't know God's truth.

But please listen, this knowledge/knowing that Peter talks about is not simply knowing the facts and using self control. This knowledge/knowing relates to knowing God, because as we know God more, the more we change and act how he wants us to.....and we hear from John in our second reading. One of John's key desires through his writings is to help us to know that Jesus is the Son of God.

Alleluia! This means faith in God (see Hosea 2.22: I will espouse you in faithfulness and you will come to know Yahweh), and when we have this faith it embraces a whole way of life. A life in which the way we behave is what shows others who Jesus is. Our conduct is the criterion by which life in Christ is recognised. That's a challenge – do people look at how we behave and say "That's because they know God"? (Remember the mirror we looked in a few months ago)

John continues in his letter. He says that if we do what God asks, God's love comes to perfection in us! Wow! Yet we can only do what he asks, if we know him! How do we know him? Maybe by seeing him in each other, certainly by coming to Mass where we hear him speaking to us (because that is what all the readings are doing), and by his Holy Spirit – who lives in us.....confirmation.

Maybe at times I manage to show this love in a little way, I know many of you show God's love beautifully on many occasions. St Therese of Lisieux.....love Jesus in your children; love Jesus in your work; love Jesus when you cry; love Jesus when you cook dinner; love Jesus when you clean the floor; love Jesus in every little thing; (tell the person next to you one occasion you have seen God's love demonstrated in another person). What a community we will have if more of us – as John says – obey what God has said, so this love becomes perfect.

“Why are these doubts rising in your hearts?”

These aren't my words, they are Jesus', spoken as he stood in the midst of the disciples - consider for a moment that he will tangibly be in our midst soon when Father / the Bishop calls down the Holy Spirit at the consecration. Let's not doubt this reality.

But what makes us doubt, what blocks us from increasing our faith? (Because the more faith, then the less doubt) Peter, then John and Jesus all state clearly we must repent, and tell our friends also to do this. And understand, to repent doesn't just mean go to confession/reconciliation, it means to change. We feel sorry for what we have done wrong, and to make a change for the better (Wikipedia). Not easy. BUT it is God telling us this. Let's say yes to God.

Many people find saying sorry or going to reconciliation difficult. Well, then in a quiet moment say sorry in your heart, but include in this the intention to change and as St Peter said to turn to God. This is a healthy habit, and we will probably find that we eventually want to come to reconciliation.

And from our readings there are 2 things that are so reassuring, even exciting! And this we can share with everyone.

1. The disciples had lived and breathed Jesus for 3 years, yet even they had doubts as he stood among them. That must help us accept our doubts, and recall his words “Peace be with you”
2. John makes clear it is the sacrifice of Jesus that takes our sins away; it is not our effort. Jesus has done the work for us (a great and often unrecognised truth of Christianity compared to “religion” in general).....what we have to do is say yes, and follow him.

I said at the beginning we are on a journey. If you have had an experience of true love – this may happen often, or it may not have lasted – you have had an experience of God. Later, at home, I ask you to reflect or ponder that experience. Love gives a depth of peace and wellbeing that I can't describe. It also often involves pain. I suggest to you that the journey we are all on is to walk the road of love. (Read the little pilgrim's progress).

Remember, God is always with us. And in Jesus he demonstrates the amazing extent of this love. We relived the depth of the pain that may come with love on Good Friday. Can you imagine asking the person you most care for to die for someone who doesn't even like you? Now we are in Eastertide, we focus on the truth, the knowledge that we talked about earlier that Jesus is alive. Alleluia! Let's search for that knowledge, and then we will experience Jesus with and within us. Like the disciples, let's be dumbfounded because our joy is so great. People will want to know why we are as we are, and we will be able to tell them.

In summary, I suspect we all have doubts just like the disciples. So Jesus gives us himself, physically and spiritually. We each have our own amount of faith and when we spend time with God, we learn to know him. As we grow in knowing him, so our faith increases. Then we will say sorry and turn more to him. Our faith will keep increasing and we will do more of what he asks us. This will be reflected in love for each other, and indeed for ourselves. Then as we share this love, through this sharing we will experience some of the perfection of love. Our joy will increase, we will recognise Jesus in each other, our behaviour might even dumbfound the world!

Rev Jonathan de Kretser