
WORD MADE FLESH

Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 5:27-32,40-41; Revelations 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Mourning Turned to Dancing*

It is not enough to be touched by Christ's redeeming love. It is not enough to recognize Christ in the stranger on the street or on the beach as in today's Gospel reading. Our texts for the third Sunday of Passover - our Pascha, our feast of liberation and freedom - show us the implications of the resurrected life, of our restored freedom. We are called to sanctify life, not simply to be grasped by the romanticism of the moment of redeeming love.

In today's first reading the Apostle's proclaim the resurrection of Christ, "so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The claims of personal salvation on the part of the Apostles were of no account to the authorities of the day. The proclamation of the gospel of forgiveness, however, was a singular threat and we read of the interrogation that ensues as a result. It is not the resurrection that is a threat, but the life and gospel of forgiveness that flows through the resurrected life that the authorities fear.

Today's second reading, from the book of Revelation, gives us a glimpse, through the eyes of the Apostle John on the island of Patmos, of the life of worship - of presence and praise - that flows from a restored creation. This vision is of the heavenly kingdom descended through the life, death and resurrection of Christ: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessings." For the Apostle John - for you and me - the resurrection of Christ places us in the presence of the heavenly kingdom. The resurrected life is the restoration of that great liberty in which life was created.

At the heart of the resurrected life is repentance and forgiveness for all that misses the mark of life. In Christ the kingdom of forgiveness is opened to us and we are called to rise again and live out of our forgiveness, a life of freedom. This is why all creation praises the Lamb. The Lamb has restored creation and worship expresses the delight in what was long lost.

It is not enough to bask in the presence of one's own salvation. Resurrection is not about ecstasy. A number of the disciples spend the night fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. In the Gospel reading we see Christ, for the third time, appearing to them following his resurrection. Over breakfast, Jesus takes bread and fish...reminiscent of the last supper. And his words are strangely disturbing for we remember, only yesterday, the claim of the disciples in the upper room and the denial that followed quickly on its heels. Again, the same words, the same intentions as in holy week and pascha: do you know me? do you love me? do you recognize the hunger of my creation?" And, Christ replies to Peter's affirmative answer: "Feed my sheep."

The resurrected life expresses the love which nurtures all creation and reorients us from death and denial to

life and affirmation. In the gospel of forgiveness all creation rejoices, for life has been restored and "mourning turned to dancing."

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