

3rd Sunday of Easter

Cycle A, 4.26.20

Acts 2:14, 22-33/ 1 Peter 1:17-21/

Luke 24:13-35

OPEN YOUR EYES AND RECOGNIZE THE LORD IN YOUR MIDST

This despicable virus, besides taking the lives of so many people throughout the world and infecting untold more, has also spurred on a lot of personal soul-searching, deep conversations within families and among friends, more than a few hilarious song parodies, Brad Pitt playing Dr. Anthony Fauci on “Saturday Night Live,” creative online musical concerts (like the ones that our brass-playing Tom Dwyer and our flute-playing Martha Uhey sent me) and wonderful pieces of writing and poetry. A friend of mine, Carlo from Sagrada Store in Oakland, emailed one that he wrote just the other day. It’s entitled “Glimpse:”



GLIMPSE

*Masked, and walking along
the shore of the Bay*

*I came upon a woman lingering by her
stroller.*

*Pausing myself, I guessed about month
for this newcomer.*

*Only three weeks, she said, have a look.
And fixing on me from within the swaddle:
Two obsidian glints of new life.*

Continuing my walk

*I notice all the masks passing,
And I realized the opportunity
in this moment that has befallen us.*

*To look into a covered face
is to encounter another's eyes.*

Eyes:

*Our first portals to love
and how we will speak our final goodbyes.*

*Eyes can wink in amusement
and squint in laughter,*

*Eyes can tell our bewilderment and fear,
reveal our determination,
express our hope.*

*Tearful, they cleanse our grief and sadness.
Our eyes, our souls.*

Look. Can you hear my eyes?

Last night I stood alone – because visitors and family members aren’t allowed in the hospital – at the bedside of Joyce, a 96-year old parishioner whose time on this earth was ebbing away, although not from the coronavirus. I offered the Church’s prayer of final commendation: *May you see your redeemer face to face and enjoy the vision of God forever.* Her eyes were closed, locked in that in-between space – still here, but more in anticipation of the moment that her eyes will open to behold the glory of God whom she worshipped and adored in communion with all of you. Knowing the vision that Joyce was preparing to see, I understood that she couldn’t open her eyes or respond to the prayers or join in reciting the “Our Father” as we will in a few moments. Her sight was set on a brighter Kingdom, God’s new world, a banquet table spread before her. As I anointed her head with oil, I knew her cup was overflowing, and that goodness and kindness followed her all the days of her life that were now coming to an end. Like the disciples at Emmaus her eyes would soon be opened and she would recognize her Redeemer as she sits at table with Jesus.

This weekend forty-two of our young children were scheduled to receive their First Eucharist, always a moving and inspiring Spring celebration for parish and families, which is delayed until we can safely gather again. Catechists and parents had spent months in religion class and faith formation gathering with these beautiful little ones to help cultivate a special kind of vision, their eyes of faith. A hymn that was sung in years gone by expressed it so succinctly yet powerfully:

*Look beyond the bread you eat;
See your Savior and your Lord.
Look beyond the cup you drink;
See his love poured out as blood.*



Those children, even at their tender young age, are being invited into a new way of understanding who they are – to be *in the world, but not of the world*. We have a divine destiny, a homeland that awaits us. As Peter tells us today in the epistle: *Your faith and hope are in God*, not in the powers of this world; and as St. Paul so often reminded the early Christians: *Our citizenship is in heaven*.

The beautiful Easter Season tale of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is all about eyes and vision – what they see with their eyes and what escapes their sight. They're downcast, not even looking at the stranger who approaches and walks with them. The gospel says: *their eyes were prevented from recognizing him*. Then

Jesus asks a simple question which opens the floodgate for them: *"What are you discussing as you walk along?"* A conversation begins which is an ideal model of prayer for us during these anxious and uncertain days. The stranger understood that people who are caught up in their own little world of discouragement and depression don't bother to look to see others. Jesus understood their anger and frustration – their pent-up feelings. He knew that the two had to vent all of this before they would be ready to listen to him. And Jesus accepted them exactly where they were.



That's what prayer is about, especially in this time of tragedy. Jesus is with us in the midst of our problems. He knows about them, but WE need to get in touch with them and express them. Then, when we're rid of a lot of blinding obstacles, the Lord can begin to speak to us, as he did to the two disciples, and open the scriptures to us. He will show us that all the scriptural stories about God reveal the overriding truth of our faith. In every case God acted unexpectedly and unimaginably – bringing life out of death. In dialogue with Jesus they were able to believe and understand the tale of the women who told about an empty tomb and a vision of angels who announced that Jesus was alive.

That invitation is extended to each of us today to come to the Lord in our pain and struggle, in our frustration and our anger. Share it with him so that Christ, in turn, can share with you his compassion and understanding, his love and his peace. Then we can say with the Emmaus travelers: *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”* What glimpses of God’s grace will you and I be invited to catch sight of as the days of yet another week of confinement unfold? Look into the masked faces and *realize the opportunity in this moment that has befallen us*. May we see the face of Jesus and behold the presence of God.



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