

2nd Sunday of Easter

Fr. Bob VerEecke, S.J.

Last Sunday there were around 3000 people here to celebrate Easter. My question is “where did they all go?” and “why did you come back?” It’s too easy to simply say that the 2000 people who did not return this Sunday and may not return again until Christmas are “Christmas and Easter Catholics”. Is a once or twice visit to Church enough to satisfy one’s spiritual or ritual needs, that someone can say “that’s enough for me”. As a parish who tries very hard to create an environment of inclusion and acceptance where faith and beauty are interwoven, we can ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to engage those who cross the threshold of our church so that people want more, want to return, want to be fed with the word of God and nourished with the Eucharist, week after week. Have we spoken, sung, prayed, danced enough of God’s promise that there is something so compelling that one says “I can’t get enough” I know I want and need more. But at the same time there are those 2000 who are saying by their absence, “I’ve had enough”.

If there were a banner or sign outside announcing the theme of today’s preaching, mine would be “Had enough?” It would be an invitation to reflect deeply on the Peace, the Love, the Healing, the Joy, the Life that comes to us in the Eucharist through the Spirit of the Risen Christ and also an acknowledgement of the very challenging times we are experiencing as a Catholic community once again. In the past weeks I’m sure you have heard as I have “I’ve had enough” from many within our Catholic community. With all the revelations of abuse and questions of the culpability of those religious leaders who did not address the problem in an open, transparent and timely fashion, the wounds of so many that may have begun to heal after 10 years in this Archdiocese have been opened up again with similar strains of anger, disillusionment, even disgust and many are saying “I’ve had enough”. Even if the Church is now trying to address more openly the terrible reality of abuse by its clergy, the stories that continue to emerge about the global dimensions of the problem and especially the pattern of denial and secrecy on the part of the hierarchy challenge all of us to ask how we continue to find light and peace and hope in the face of darkness, distrust and disgrace.

I imagine those first disciples after the Crucifixion saying to themselves “I’ve had enough” Enough heartbreak, disillusionment, If we look at today’s Gospel with the disciples back in the upper room after the events of the Crucifixion, we may see ourselves reflected in their doubts, their fears, their disillusionment, their hopelessness. I always have wondered why they found themselves back in that upper room after they had deserted and denied Jesus, had fled for their lives, hiding from the brutal reality that Jesus who had been their hope, was no more. All their dreams had been shattered. But something draws them to a place where they had experienced life, love, community, a vision of God’s kingdom where peace, healing, forgiveness was at the center of all. That’s what Jesus had proclaimed and lived, had preached and shown in his actions, had given life to in bread and wine, blessed and broken. Those memories of what had been, the bonds of friendship and community that had been there for them must have been what drew them back. I can imagine each one coming under cover of darkness, not wanting to be recognized as one of his disciples making their way back to the upper room and finding each other there. Saying “oh, you’re here” You came back too. But what do we do now?

The Gospel tells us that it is in the midst of this fear, apprehension about the future, confusion and perhaps despair, Jesus appears. Unexpectedly speaking Peace! Do not be afraid! His presence and his peace is experienced as a reality that constitutes a new beginning for these men and women who had lost hope in the loss of their beloved friend, Rabboni. For those gathered in the upper room that Easter Sunday, there is no doubt that God has completed the work of creation begun in the story of Genesis. God is refashioning the story of death and disintegration/ God is weaving a new tapestry of life, peace, hope, and love. God in Jesus is saying, I can never give you enough of my love, my peace, my life.

But like Thomas who was not with the other broken-hearted, fearful disciples, some of us, including myself may be saying. “I want to believe that in Christ all things are made new” I want to surrender to the gift of peace, joy and love but look at the woundedness of our Church that continues to be torn apart by scandal and distrust, look at the wounds of our world that continues to be torn apart by unimaginable violence. I’ve had enough! Haven’t you, my Lord and My God?

And like Thomas we hear the words, See my wounds. Place your fingers in my side. Touch me and see that I carry in my Risen body, not just my

wounds, but yours as well, my beloved world, and especially the community of my beloved disciples. Don't be afraid. Don't give up. You will know who I am. You will know that I have loved you. You will know who I am.