

Third Sunday of Easter – Cycle A April 6, 2008

Readings: Acts 2:14, 22-33; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

Sojourn Wisely

During most of our liturgical year, our first reading is from the Old Testament and our second reading is normally from one of St. Paul's letters. The first reading from the Old Testament usually ties in with the gospel reading; it gives a flavor for how Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophets of Hebrew Scripture.

But if you'll notice this year, during our season of Easter, the first reading will be from the Acts of the Apostles and the second reading will be from the writings of St. Peter, our first pope. The Acts of the Apostles was written by St. Luke as sort of an extension to his gospel. It tells the story of the early Church and primarily recounts stories and the deeds of St. Peter and St. Paul. So this morning we hear two teachings by St. Peter. And as we listen, we can begin to get a feel for those things that were important to the leader of our early Church; how we were ransomed by Christ's blood and how Christ conquered death. The problem for us is that we very often don't listen; we don't pay attention.

St. Peter says in the second reading: “... *conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning, realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct ... with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb.*” He refers to “*the time of your sojourning.*” Sojourning; now that's an interesting word we don't use very often. It sounds adventurous and romantic. To me, it's always had the connotation of wandering through the countryside. But I looked up the word sojourn in the dictionary and found that it more accurately means to reside temporarily, as to have a short stay on vacation. And so when St. Peter refers to our time of sojourning he is reminding us that our life here on earth is a temporary residence. It's a reminder that we should spend our short time on earth wisely.

This concept of sojourning also reminds me of one of my favorite quotes of all time. I think I've shared it with you before, but it's worth sharing again. It's from St. Gregory the Great. He says: “*Anyone who is determined to reach his destination is not deterred by the roughness of the road that leads to it. Nor must we allow the charm of success to seduce us, or we shall be like a foolish traveler who is so distracted by the pleasant meadows through which he is passing that he forgets where he is going.*”

We need to remember our ultimate destination; where we are going. We can get so distracted that we often don't listen; we don't pay attention. We don't see the signs of the times. We don't see the right path for us to travel. We don't hear God speaking to us when we listen to scripture. We don't see Christ present in our neighbor. We should all try to do better, but at the same time not feel too bad because Jesus' own disciples didn't recognize His presence in the stranger they met on the way to Emmaus. They didn't comprehend what was foretold about Him by the prophets. He rebuked them and said: “*Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!*”

And then as they traveled along, He gave them what was surely the best Old Testament bible study class that has ever been presented. I think He got their attention.

It's a shame that they didn't take notes and write out a summary for us, but the information and understanding that Jesus shared with them, they shared verbally with the other members of the early Church. And while this information was not written down as scripture, we can believe that it was part of the basic teaching of the Church and passed on to us in the writings of the Early Church Fathers. We have reliable information and knowledge that is part of our Christian Tradition, even though it may not be written in the Bible.

So let us sojourn during this Easter Season. While you sit in church on Sunday morning, I ask you to make a special effort to listen and pay attention to the Scripture readings. Listen and hear the words and actions of Jesus and Peter and Paul. Maybe you can come to church a little early and look over the readings prior to Mass. Get a feel for what was important to the early Church and how the members were expected to conduct themselves. Reflect on how the teachings apply to you today.

And during your sojourn, make sure to not only look for Christ's message in scriptures, but also to be attentive to seeing the face of Christ in those you meet each day; those that are sojourning with us on our short journey through life. We should try not to be blind as the disciples were on the road to Emmaus.

Take time to listen and to pay attention. Sojourn wisely my friends, and peace be with you!

Deacon Joe Hulway