

Fr. Gary's Homily Notes
Fifth Sunday of Easter | April 28, 2024

Do you remember the first line of the Opening Prayer today? No? Fine...I guess I'll just have to do it again. Let us pray.

"Almighty, ever-living God, (you) constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us..." It goes on from there but that's what I want you to remember. What an amazing statement of our faith! God is constantly accomplishing something within us, something we call the Paschal Mystery. Every moment of our lives, God turns death to life, leads us from sin to salvation, brings us out of despair to hope; God turns darkness into light, and heals whatever is broken.

We call that the Paschal Mystery and it is what Christ accomplishes in us - and among us - and with us. It is what it means to be a Christian.

From the earliest church it became clear that this was so much more than people following a great teacher, disciples following a Master. This was different. The Master remained in them, was alive in them!

As Christians, we live in Christ and Christ lives in us. He remains in us and us in him. We are inseparable, like a vine to its branches; our life comes from his life. We exist in this world so that he may exist in this world.

This truth is the basis of our sacramental theology. It is why we celebrate Baptism and Confirmation, why couples sacramentalize their marriages and why I was ordained. Sacraments are the means by which we are grafted to Christ, how we can literally participate in the life of Christ and how Christ remains in us. Our Sacraments are the life stream of God's grace into this world. They form us as a community. Our Sacraments shape our thoughts and decisions and values and priorities.

Today we celebrate First Eucharist for these young members of our parish family. This is not simply a rite of passage. For the first time, Christ will come to dwell in you/them in a way he ever has before. The Mystery of his death and resurrection comes alive in you/them in a way that has never happened before.

Through this Sacrament the Church shouts out to them -and to all of us: "We need Jesus and Jesus needs us!" He literally remains alive on this earth through us. We are how Christ's death and resurrection remains active in this world. That is what we mean in that prayer when we say that God constantly accomplishes the Paschal Mystery in us.

So, just as Jesus was the friend of sinners, so must we be, not standing in moral judgement over them but, rather inviting them to our tables and to his. Jesus was a healer, so must be healers, to bring comfort to the broken, peace to those who live in chaos, to be the means of healing rather than division.

Jesus was a preacher. Like St. Paul and so many others of the early church, the Word is alive in us, so that we, too, might proclaim the Kingdom of God, the love of God, the power of God's re-creation every day.

Today, these kids receive Eucharist for the first time. It sets the course of a lifetime. God will find a way through them, as God does through us, to accomplish what needs to be accomplished on earth. They and we need this Sacrament, not only the first time, not once in a while, but every week, so that we may truly go forth and bear much fruit.

"Almighty, ever-living God, (you) constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us..."