

## **HOMILY – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER 2018 4-8-18**

In many cultures there are rites of passage to initiate adolescents into adulthood. There is in many Hispanic communities the rite of passage for 15 year old girls called the Quinceanera. Young teen boys in the Jewish community celebrate their Bar Mitzvah. There is a rite of passage that some Native American Indians have celebrated and perhaps still do. In this American Indian ritual, a young boy 14 or 15 years old would be taken by a group of elders to a designated tree in the darkest part of a forest. It usually would happen on the longest night of the year. There alone, and without provisions or weapons, the boy would be told he must remain alone there until the dawn. The young boy would be faced with the threat of wild animals and the uncertainty of the darkness and the sounds of the forest. For the young boy, the night would be long and frightening. You can imagine how happy he would have been when at last he saw the first rays of the sun slowly rising in the east. But then, he would have seen something else that would have made him even happier. Because at dawn, out from one of the trees nearby, would have appeared his father. Although the boy thought he had been alone, his father was watching him all through the night.

The apostles in today's Gospel were experiencing something similar to that of the young boy. Their story, like his, took place at night. It was the night of the resurrection of Jesus and they were alone and afraid. They felt alone and confused because Jesus, to whom they had pledged their lives, had been brutally crucified a few days earlier. All their dreams of serving in his company had been brought to an abrupt end. They were afraid because the power of Rome that so efficiently brought Jesus to his death could at any time be turned against them. So they gathered behind locked doors and trembled in fear.

Then suddenly, Jesus walks through the locked doors and offers them a word of peace. Everything changes. The apostles now see that Jesus is alive. They realize, as did the young Indian boy, that although they thought they had been left alone, Jesus had been watching them and guarding them. Now they could see and hear him.

I invite us to ponder on two sentences that Jesus spoke to the apostles in that room where they were gathered after the passion and resurrection of Jesus. **“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** These words are meant for us. We have not been blessed by the physical appearance of Jesus and yet we have faith. In some strange way, the reason the apostles saw the risen Christ was so that we do not need to see him. The reason that Thomas touched the risen Christ was so that we do not need to touch him. If we believe in the witness of the apostles, we can believe that Christ is near even when his presence is not so obvious.

When we have to face a crisis in our life, when we lose someone that we love, when we are hurt by someone that we had trusted, when we have to face the consequences of a terrible mistake, we want to see Jesus. We desire his presence. We want the assurance that he will be with us. Easter tells us that even when Christ is not visible to us, we are visible to him. He is silently watching over us behind the tree in the dark night. We want the confidence of knowing that he is with us to help us make the important decisions in our life. When we face sickness, when we begin to realize that our life is coming to an end, we want to hear Christ say to us, **“Peace be with you.”**

Richard Rohr, a wonderful spiritual writer, tells of an experiment where a wall-eyed pike is placed in an aquarium. For several days the fish is fed with small minnows. In the middle of the experiment, a glass partition is placed in the middle of the aquarium and the pike has access only to one side. Then the researchers drop the minnows on the other side. The pike swims toward the minnows, but he hits his head against the glass. He hits against the glass several times and eventually seems to sense he is not going to get those minnows and begins to ignore them. At that point the researchers take out the glass. The minnows come right up to the pike but the pike does not eat them. The experiment ends when the wall-eyed pike starves to death. He is convinced that he is not going to get those minnows, so there is no point in wasting his time or hurting his nose again.

Easter tells us, never give up. No matter what the obstacles, the Risen Lord will feed us and restore us to hope. Faith in the resurrection means we do not need to be afraid. Although at times it may seem like we are standing alone and only crashing into obstacles, Easter faith will tell us that Christ is watching and guarding us all through the long dark nights of our lives. Love wins.

### **Closing Story 4-8-18**

A little old lady heard somebody knocking on her door one day. When she opened the door she was confronted by a well-dressed young man carrying a vacuum cleaner. “Good morning,” said the young man, “If I could have a couple of minutes of your time, I’d like to show the vacuum cleaner that I have here. It is high-powered and it’s very good.” And she said, “No, go away. I have no money. I can’t even pay any of my bills. I think you are just wasting your time.” and started to close the door.

As quick as a flash, the young man put his foot in the door, pushed it wide open, and said, “Don’t be too hasty, not until you have at least seen my demonstration.” With that he emptied a bucket of horse manure onto her hallway carpet. “If this vacuum cleaner does not remove all traces of the horse manure from your carpet, madam, I will personally eat the remainder.” “Well,” she said, “I hope you have a good appetite because the electricity was cut off this morning.”