

3rd Sunday of Easter – Cycle A
by Father Hugo L. Blotsky, O.S.B.
April 26, 2020

- I. **This is a busy time of the year. Holy Week was a holy time for many Catholics as much got stirred up in their personal and spiritual lives, especially because of the COVID19 restrictions. That is why we call the days between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday “Holy Week.” Things get stirred up so that we can die with Christ on Good Friday, and then to rise with Christ on Easter Sunday.**

- A. **A couple years ago, a man said to me that he hadn’t been able to pray since Holy Week. For him, Holy Week was such a grace-filled time with all the special Masses and other Services. Once Easter Sunday was behind us, he felt let down spiritually. He was wishing that the spiritual high that he felt during Holy Week would have continued after Easter Sunday.**
 1. **This desire to want to feel more of God’s Presence is grace from the Lord.**

- B. **This year, he probably felt let down spiritually because he wasn’t able to attend any of the Triduum Services in person due to the restrictions.**

- C. **Last Sunday was Divine Mercy Sunday. Divine Mercy Sunday of 2011 will be remembered for many years down the road, as it was the day when over 1 million pilgrims from many parts of the world gathered at the Vatican for the beatification of Pope John Paul II. The Pope established the Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday during his homily at the canonization of St. Faustina, April 30th, 2000. That was 20 years ago today.**

- D. **The evening of Divine Mercy Sunday in 2011 will also stand out in memory for many people. The world received the news that Bin Laden had been found and killed by United States Navy Seals in Pakistan. His death brought an end of the mastermind of the attacks on 9/11, but it hasn’t brought the end to terrorism.**
 1. **Thousands of people started celebrating when they heard the news of his capture.**
 2. **They weren’t celebrating his death, but rather they were celebrating that good was able to overcome evil, and they were celebrating from a sense of relief that Bin Laden no longer had a strangle hold upon people who believed in peace and freedom.**

- E. **Divine Mercy Sunday of 2014 was marked by a historic event with the canonization of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II in St. Peter’s Square by Pope Francis. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI concelebrated at the Mass.**

- F. That was the first time in history that two popes were canonized together at the same ceremony. And, it was the first time that two living popes concelebrated at a canonization Mass for two popes. Pope John Paul II died on the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday in 2005.
- G. The Divine Mercy message that the Lord gave St. Faustina in visions in the 1930's to share with the rest of us is quite simple: Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world. Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us. Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that that graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.
- H. When we reflect on the Mercy of the Divine Heart of Jesus, we want to recall the message St. Julian of Norwich received during her visions of the Passion of the Lord: that our sins are as nothing compared to the love and mercy that the Lord Jesus has for each and every one of us.
- II. What we see in the Gospels after Jesus rose from the dead is that the disciples couldn't recognize the Resurrected Jesus when He appeared to them. They recognized Him when He showed them His Divine Mercy.
- A. When Mary Magdalen went to the tomb to look for the body of Jesus, she saw Jesus standing in the garden, she mistook Him to be the gardener. She only recognized Him after the way He addressed her as "Mary."
- B. Another incident was when some apostles and other disciples had been out fishing all night on the Sea of Tiberias but without luck. At dawn, they saw the Resurrected Jesus standing on the shore but they didn't recognize Him. When Jesus instructed them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, they caught so many fish so that they were unable to pull in the net that was filled with fish. Then they recognized the Resurrected Jesus through this act of Divine Mercy.
- C. In Catholic belief and in the tradition of the Eastern Christians and the Orthodox Church, the belief is that the Risen Jesus appeared to the Virgin Mary many times, even though it is not recorded in the Scriptures. This comes from Oral Tradition.
- D. In the Gospel for this Sunday, we read about two disciples walking to the village of Emmaus which is about seven miles from Jerusalem. It

was the first day of the week, Sunday, and the disciples were discussing all that had taken place in Jerusalem with the trial, crucifixion of Jesus, and now the report that Jesus was risen from the dead. They met the Risen Jesus along the way but they didn't recognize Him. It says in the Gospel, "...their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him."

E. Since it was towards evening, the disciples invited Jesus to their home to share a meal and to spend the night. During the meal, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized Him as the Risen Lord Jesus, but He vanished from their sight.

F. The disciple received a taste of His Divine Mercy during this encounter. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"

III. The Emmaus story inspired a type of retreat experience called an Emmaus Walk which seems to have begun in the 1960's after Vatican II. Basically, what happens on the Emmaus Walk is that two people spend a couple hours, or a day, together during which they share their spiritual journey with each other. During this time together, they pray together to encounter the Risen Lord Jesus in a fresh and new way.

A. When I was in the seminary, I was asked to introduce the Emmaus Walk to college seminarians on the seminary campus. Part of a Sunday afternoon was spent in my giving a spiritual talk in preparation for the Emmaus Walk. We then had slips of paper with numbers on them for a drawing to determine who their partner would be for the Emmaus Walk. Two slips of paper had the number 1 written on them, two slips with the number 2, etc. Then they were sent out on their Emmaus Walk.

B. After the college seminarians had spent a couple hours of sharing together, we came together for a period of sharing of experiences. It seemed that some students had set their expectations too high for their experience. Some were able to reach a level of sharing that was a fellowship of sharing their faith journey with each other. Other students had a more social time together. If we would have done the Emmaus Walk at another retreat, I would have insisted that more time be given to the preparation for the Emmaus Walk.

C. The Emmaus Walk was taken over by the Episcopalians and Lutherans to refer to their version of the Catholic Cursillo Weekend

in the 1960's and 1970's. The Catholic Cursillo is a Christ-centered encounter that starts on Thursday evening until Sunday afternoon in which the participants are introduced to the basic teachings of the Catholic Faith and they are given an intense experience of Catholic community.

- 1. The Lutherans and Episcopalians called their version of Cursillo, either Emmaus Walk or Walk to Emmaus.**

- D. The Cursillo Movement played an important role in bring about spiritual renewal within the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council.**
- E. The Cursillo program was also tailored to bring about spiritual renewal in prisons. Members of the Cursillo Movement in Montana designed a Cursillo weekend experience for the prison in Montana called "Koinonia." I helped with one Koinonia weekend at a state prison.**
- F. As you know from your classes on history of the Catholic Church, the threefold mission of the Church is Koinonia (which means communion), Kerygma, which means proclamation), and diakonia (which means service).**
- G. The Holy Spirit works through the many different renewal programs and movements within the Catholic Church. The Spirit is definitely working within the Catholic Church even though we sometimes don't clear evidence of the Spirit. We can judge by the good fruit that comes from the various different retreats, renewal programs, and spiritual movements within the Church that the Spirit is very much alive in the Church, guiding the Church, and sanctifying the Church.**