

Easter 3 - Year B - April 15, 2018

NCIS, Law and Order, CSI, and for those who are more mature, there were Perry Mason, Quincy ME, Hawaii 5-0, and, of course, Murder, She Wrote. These tv shows made us into mini crime detectives trying to figure the truth, the bad guy, the sinister plot. All of these shows revolved around getting proof. We learned about witnesses, eye witnesses, evidence, circumstantial evidence, and hard evidence. We went through all of these steps in order to find the truth.

Today's gospel passage is swirling in depths of proof, witnesses and truth. To the frightened disciples, Jesus shows his nail prints in his hands and feet. He invites them to touch his flesh. Then, he asks for something to eat. All of this to prove that he was not a ghost because ghosts don't have real flesh. Ghosts do not eat. So, there is the proof that Jesus actually rose from the dead, physically rose from the dead.

But then, Jesus goes one step further. Luke the evangelist tells us that Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures, in other words all the prophecies about him and his mission. Notice that the gospel does not say that Jesus merely helped them understand, but rather that he opened their minds to understand.

Jesus goes again one step further, he adds those famous words: "You are witnesses of these things." They are not mere observers, not just fans, but rather they are credible first-hand witnesses. Witnesses have a great responsibility. They must testify, speak up, and speak the truth. If they do not do that, then they are failing in their duty as witnesses.

So, what does a witness for Jesus do? We have an example in the first reading as Peter speaks to the people on Pentecost. Witnesses for Christ do two things: they tell the story of Jesus, and they tell what difference Jesus makes in their lives.

David Cameron, Prime Minister of England, was once asked about the significance of Easter. His response was that Easter is all about kindness, compassion, hard work, and responsibility. Well, those are wonderful attributes that I am sure most people will agree with, but they have nothing to do with Easter. Reducing Easter to kindness, compassion, hard work, and responsibility removes any semblance of reality to the actual event of Easter.

Easter means that Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus is God; Jesus transforms our lives because, like him, we too can conquer death; Jesus transformed the reality of human life and proved that death is not the end.

Like the commission Jesus gave to his apostles, Jesus commissions us to witness to all that he said and did. All that he said and did. We cannot change the message of Easter, as did Mr. Cameron and so many others, just to make it our message or to make it more palatable.

Witnessing to Jesus is more than telling people about the life of this great person who lived 2,000 years ago. Anyone can do that. Witnessing to Jesus is more than testifying that Jesus is risen. The soldiers guarding the tomb did that. Witnessing to Jesus is testifying by our lives that the power of the risen Jesus has touched us and transformed us in the most remarkable way imaginable. Witnessing to Jesus is letting Jesus speak through us to other people. Witnessing to Jesus speaks volumes, not just words. Witnesses are not just fans, not just cheer leaders. They are committed disciples who model the words of St. Paul: "It is not longer I, but Christ who lives in me."

We cannot witness unless we are nourished with our Lord in the Eucharist. May what we celebrate here provide us with food for the journey of this life and eternal life.