

SAINT MARY PARISH, MILTON

Easter 2010 Seasonal Focus

The readings of the C Cycle for the Season of Easter focus primarily on the witness theme as the mission of Jesus is gradually handed over to his apostles and disciples, and to all disciples of Jesus today.

I. Easter Sunday

The readings for Easter Sunday invite us to believe, even though we do not understand. In the gospel, Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter and the other disciple rush to the tomb, and, seeing that the body of Jesus is not there, they do not understand. In the first reading, Peter summarizes the heart of the good news, and speaks as a witness of his experience of the risen Christ. The readings invite us to look beyond what we see, to “seek what is above, not what is on earth” as Paul writes to the Colossians in the second reading. Our faith joins us to Christ, and makes life possible for us, even though we die.

Second Sunday of Easter

The themes of Easter Sunday (awe, wonder, faith) are reflected again today. All three readings reflect a sense of wonder and awe at what is happening. We see a development in the apostles from unbelieving to believing: in the gospel, the day of the resurrection still sees them fearful and unbelieving; in the second reading, we have John’s reflection on the Risen Christ; and in the first reading, the apostles are providing a strong witness to the resurrection by the signs and wonders they are performing. We are advised not to be afraid in the face of the very powerful stuff that is happening, even though we do not understand it. The theological virtues are also reflected in the readings: in the first reading, we are given a reason for faith; in the second reading, a reason to hope; and in the gospel reading, a reason for charity: Thomas was loved in spite of his unbelief.

Third Sunday of Easter

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” Today’s readings reflect the end-point of the sacrifice of Calvary. The sacrificial lamb figures predominantly in second reading and in the gospel. In the gospel, Jesus tests Peter with his three-fold questioning, and Peter comes to the realization that he too will be sacrificed (as will all other apostles and disciples of Jesus, the Sacrificial Lamb). Also present is the obedience theme (first reading): “We must obey God rather than men.” If we do so, everything will come to us.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The original little community of believers expands. In the first reading, “almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.” In the second reading, John has a vision of “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue.” The expansion of the church still goes on today, even with all the problems it encounters. The paradox of Holy Week is reflected in the readings: in the first and second readings, the Messiah came for the Jews, but Gentiles believe and are gathered into the community; in the second reading, the robes of believers are made white in the blood of the Lamb; in the gospel, the “Father and I are one.” The community of believers will continue to grow as long as we keep our center: faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must be grounded in the Lamb of God.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Easter creates a new era. Newness is the focus of today’s readings. In the first reading, Paul and Barnabas report that God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. In the second reading, John has a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, the former having passed away. The One who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” In the gospel, Jesus gives a new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” This kind of love is to be the distinguishing characteristic of the disciple of Christ. Today, people’s understanding of what real love is is at an all time low.

Sixth Sunday of Easter

The readings today begin a transition: the mission of proclaiming the gospel is transitioning from Jesus to the disciples. In effect, Jesus is saying: “My work is done. Now the mission is in the hands of the Holy Spirit.” First reading: “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit. . . .” We also see reflected the paradox: the old is passing away and the new is here. In the second reading, there is a new Jerusalem, and it has no temple in it. In the gospel, Jesus gives peace, but not like the world gives peace. The old Mosaic Law is replaced by the sacrificial love of Jesus as the motivating factor for all we do – a love guided by the Holy Spirit, dwelling not in a physical building, but within the person.

Ascension

The witness theme is very strong in these readings. From now on, witnesses take their instruction from the Holy Spirit (which is the practice of council.) Witnessing done in the Holy Spirit is much more powerful. The Holy Spirit works more with our hearts than with our brains; the heart enables us to love, as Jesus commanded. Paul writes to the Ephesians (second reading) “May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened.”

Pentecost

Unity in the Spirit is the predominant theme of today's celebration. Even though we have different gifts, we are one in the Spirit. We can be driven apart by the divisions in the world, but the Spirit can pull us together, give us the power that we need, and keep us moving in the right direction. We see the transformation possible especially in today's gospel, which starts with fear (fear of sin, fear of death), moves to a recognition of Jesus through his suffering (wounds), and then to having the breath of life breathed into them. This gives them peace and the power to do what they have been called to do. The whole season is summarized in today's gospel.