

3rd Sunday of Easter

St. Cletus Parish April 30, 2017 9:30am and 11:30am Masses

Deacon Tom Burke

Acts of the Apostles 2 : 14, 22 – 33

1 Peter 1 : 17 – 21

Luke 24 : 13 – 35

JESUS IS A BIG DEAL. JESUS IS A REALLY BIG DEAL. IT WAS HIS LIFE, DEATH AND MOST IMPORTANTLY HIS RESURRECTION THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

BEFORE OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, LIFE HAD NO PROMISE EXCEPT DEATH. BEFORE THE RESURRECTION THERE WAS ONLY THIS LIFE - NOTHING ELSE. DEATH HAD A 'DEATH GRIP' ON HOPE. DEATH HAD A DEATH GRIP ON FREEDOM. FEAR OF DEATH ENSLAVED ALL OF MANKIND MAKING US GRASP AT LIFE LIKE SO MANY DROWNING PEOPLE ON THE SIDE OF A CAPSIZED BOAT. WITHOUT HOPE PEOPLE JUST CLUNG TO ALL THE MONEY, PROPERTY, POWER AND PLEASURE THEY COULD GET.

WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION, OUR LORD'S TEACHINGS DIDN'T MAKE SENSE, "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. GIVE AWAY YOUR CLOAK, TURN THE OTHER CHEEK, WASH ANOTHER'S FEET, LOVE OTHERS AS I HAVE LOVED YOU". IN THE ANCIENT WORLD CHILDREN WERE A BURDEN UNTIL THEY WERE OLD ENOUGH TO WORK AND OLD PEOPLE A NUISANCE UNLESS THEY HAD PROPERTY WORTH INHERITING.

AREN'T WE GLAD JESUS CAME SO WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE LIKE THAT ANYMORE? BEFORE JESUS FEAR OF RUNNING OUT OF MONEY, POWER, PLEASURE AND CONTROL WAS A TERRIBLE WAY TO LIVE.

IN THE NICK OF TIME FOR US, BY HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WE HAVE BEEN SAVED FROM A WORLD FULL OF GREEDY SELFISH PEOPLE WHO MAGNIFIED THEIR NEED FOR SECURITY, CONTROL AND WEALTH AND MINIMIZED THE NEEDS OF THE POOREST, LONELIEST, WEAKEST AND MOST VULNERABLE.

JESUS HAS RE-CREATED US INTO A “RESURRECTION PEOPLE”. WE ARE REBORN AS A PEOPLE OF HOPE. NOT JUST HOPE FOR MORE IN THIS LIFE BUT HOPE FOR MORE ABUNDANT LIFE; EVERLASTING LIFE. REBORN FOR EVERLASTING LIFE MEANS SLAVERY TO FEAR; FEAR OF DEATH IS GONE. WE NO LONGER HAVE TO CLUTCH LIFE LIKE DROWNING PEOPLE ON THE SIDE OF A BOAT.

REMEMBER CLEOPAS AND THE OTHER DISCIPLE? DEATH NO LONGER HAD POWER OVER THEM AS THEY RAN TO JERUSALEM IN THE DARK. THEIR BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION CALLED THEM TO ACTION AND CAUSED THEM TO DROP WHAT THEY WERE DOING AND RUN TO PROCLAIM THE POWER OF THE RISEN CHRIST OVER DEATH. FROM THIS DAY FORWARD THE DISCIPLES GATHERED AS ONE AND HEALED THEIR DOUBTS AND SETTLED DEBATES IN THE “BREAKING OF THE BREAD”. WE TOO AS “RESURRECTION PEOPLE” CAN HAVE SCRIPTURE SET OUR HEARTS ON FIRE. WE CAN RECOGNIZE JESUS IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD, PUT OTHERS FIRST AS CHRIST DID AND GO FORTH PROCLAIMING: “THE LORD IS RISEN, ALLELUIA.”

SOME OF YOU MIGHT BE THINKING: “DEACON TOM, I COME TO MASS EVERY SUNDAY AND MY HEART IS NOT ON FIRE. I TRY MY BEST TO RECOGNIZE JESUS IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD. WHY CAN’T I SEE HIM LIKE THESE TWO DISCIPLES DID? HOW COME I DON’T FEEL WHAT THEY FELT? I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN! DON’T WE ALL WANT TO BE LIKE CLEOPAS AND THE OTHER DISCIPLE? // TO BE LIKE THEM I REALIZED I NEEDED TO CULTIVATE “ABANDONMENT” IN MYSELF. YES, “ABANDONMENT”. THESE TWO DISCIPLES, AFTER ENCOUNTERING CHRIST, ABANDONED THEIR PLANS AND RACED INTO THE DARK BACK TO JERUSALEM. BELIEVE ME ABANDONING MY PLANS ISN’T EASY, BUT IN THE HOPE OF WALKING TOGETHER, LET ME SHARE WITH YOU MY STRUGGLE WITH LETTING GO.

SOME YEARS AGO, GAIL AND I WERE ONLY MARGINAL IN OUR DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH. WE GAVE MONEY OUT OF OUR EXCESS MONEY AND LIKE MOST OF US THERE WASN’T MUCH EXCESS MONEY. OF COURSE, I KNEW WE SHOULD BE TITHING, BUT I WONDERED HOW TAKING 10% OFF THE TOP WOULD CHANGE OUR LIFE STYLE. I THOUGHT, “WHAT WOULD GAIL SAY IF WE HAD LESS MONEY? WOULD GAIL BE UPSET?” LIKE A CHICKEN, I PROJECTED ONTO GAIL MY OWN INSECURITY; YOU CAN GUESS WHAT MOST OF MY EXCUSES WERE.

SO, BEING CHICKEN, BEFORE TELLING GAIL, I DECIDED TO CONDUCT MY OWN EXPERIMENT. I ASKED MY OFFICE BOOKKEEPER TO AUTOMATICALLY DEPOSIT 10% OF MY SALARY INTO A SEPARATE BANK

ACCOUNT. I SAID TO MYSELF, LET'S JUST SEE HOW UNCOMFORTABLE WE WOULD BE. AFTER A FEW MONTHS AND ALL OUR BILLS WERE GETTING PAID, IT WAS TIME TO LET GAIL IN ON THIS IDEA. I SHOWED HER OUR "CHARITY ACCOUNT" AND ASKED HER TO JOIN ME IN THE PLAN I HAD STARTED. IT WAS EASIER BECAUSE WE WERE 100% TOGETHER IN OUR 10% COMMITMENT.

THEN SOMETHING WONDERFUL AND TOTALLY UNEXPECTED HAPPENED, (pause) ALMOST IMMEDIATELY OUR HEARTS WERE OPENED TO CHRIST. THE MASS CAME ALIVE. THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST WAS REALLY PRESENT IN ME BECAUSE I TRUSTED IN THE LORD AND ABANDONED MY QUEST FOR MONEY. GOD'S GRACE OPENED WIDE MY HEART, HIS WORD ' CAUGHT FIRE IN MY HEART. THIS ABANDONMENT, LETTING GO, OF MY WILL, WAS MY JOURNEY; MY "ROAD TO EMMAUS" EXPERIENCE. I MET CHRIST ALONG THIS ROAD. BY STEPPING INTO THE DARK, LETTING GO OF MY FOCUS ON MONEY, CHRIST OPENED MY EYES TO THE NEEDS OF THE POOR.

MY STORY RELATES TO A VIDEO WE ARE ABOUT TO SEE ON THE ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL MESSAGE. AS YOU WILL HEAR IT'S "THE" CHARITY OF OUR ARCHDIOCESE. PLEASE SEE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR OWN "ROAD TO EMMAUS" EXPERIENCE. I HOPE AND PRAY THAT YOU DON'T NEED, LIKE I DID, TO ABANDON YOUR HOLD ON THIS LIFE IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST. BEFORE WE PUSH THE BUTTON FOR THE VIDEO, LET ME LEAVE YOU WITH THESE WORDS THAT

CONVICTED ME. THESE WORDS ARE FROM ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: "THE RICH WERE CREATED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR AND THE POOR WERE CREATED FOR THE SALVATION OF THE RICH". PRAISE BE TO GOD FOR THE POOR.