



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Mike Kuse
April 15, 2017 Easter Vigil in the Holy Name of Easter

Reading I Genesis 1:1-2:2
Psalm 104:1-14, 24,35
Reading II Genesis 22:1-18
Psalm 16:5-11
Reading III Exodus 14:15-15:1
Psalm Exodus 15:1-18
Reading IV Isaiah 54:5-14
Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13
Reading V Isaiah 55:1-11
Psalm Isaiah 12:2-6
Reading VI Baruch 3:9-15, 32:4
Psalm 19:8-11
Reading VII Ezekiel 36:26-28
Psalm 51:12-19
Epistle Romans 6:3-11
Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23
Gospel Mathew 28:1-10

Homily

Do you and I still get it? It started with ashes, the promise to live 40 days in the desert, the fasting, prayer and alms. Then we came to wash feet and celebrate the gift of the Eucharist, the bread, the wine and the institution of the priesthood. Last night we came to venerate the cross. Tonight the tomb is empty. You and I will have Mary, Peter and John. Mary wasn't quite sure what happened. All she could do was run and get Peter and John. They ran and found there was no one in the tomb. The rest of the story will follow in the next 50 days of the Easter season.

Tonight I would like us to think about moments in our lives when we have experienced this gift of God's creation of bringing into the world his son, and then taking him home and leaving his spirit with us. Every year we live this movement of love.

A woman came out of a very expensive store where she had just purchased an elegant handbag. As she walked out of the store she met a homeless woman sitting on the sidewalk. She looked at the woman and it just hit her, "Here I am with this magnificent handbag that I don't really need but I love it, but then I looked into the eyes of this woman and I see her begging for food and water. She didn't want my handbag. She wanted something of myself. Something moved me and I got ahold of her hand and I

stood her up until our eyes got in touch with each other. And we gave each other a hug and then I realized, 'He is risen.' "

She doesn't need this handbag, I don't need this handbag. She needs to be loved, I need to be loved. And in that expression of love, these two women brought Christ alive.

The other morning I was out at St. Dominic's School and instead of Mass we did foot washing just like we do here at Blessed Sacrament. The children had never experienced foot washing before. Two students were selected from each class, they sat up in front and I explained the whole thing to them. I said, "This is not about washing feet. This is about us experiencing Christ and serving each other."

So they took off their shoes and their socks and one by one they came up. And as I washed their feet I looked in their eyes and said, "I love you." They gave me a beautiful hug, one by one. They got the message. I said, "Now I want you to go out, and I want you to not walk up to somebody and say 'Take off your shoes and socks so I can wash your feet.' This is a ritual. But what I am asking you to do is to walk up to someone and ask, 'What could I do for you? Maybe all I need to do is smile for you. Or maybe I could go with you to the doctor. Or maybe I could just say, 'I love you.' " Or if you have hurt someone you could say, "Can you possibly forgive me."

It is in the breaking of the bread that we come to realize, "If we don't wash feet from Sunday to Sunday, then somehow we have missed the whole thing." We think, "Did I receive the body and blood of Christ, or didn't I receive the body and blood of Christ? Because if I have, I can't walk out of church on Sunday and say, 'Thank God that's over for another week.' Or tell someone, "I always go to church, but I don't do anything else. I am an involved Catholic. Can't you tell it?"

No, not really. Because you don't share your faith.

Then we come to that empty tomb. Some years ago when I lived in Litchfield, it was on this Holy Saturday morning after we had celebrated the Lenten season, the washing of the feet and Good Friday. A group of us met and there was a lady who was the sacrist of the parish and she lived across the street, so we all met at her house to participate in Morning Prayer. We went down into her basement where there was a concrete floor, there were no lights, and we sat on wooden benches. I don't think the tomb Jesus was buried in was the Trump Tower. And in that secluded basement we prayed preparing us for this night.

As you go through these rituals this evening — you were first out by the fire, then came in to listen to the stories of our faith, and now we are moving into that time when he is risen. I hope tonight when you and I leave this church that we do not think that this is just a dream. It is not a dream — it is a real thing. And as we receive the body and blood of Christ, as you walk out of any exit of this church there is going to be someone

standing there and that someone will be Jesus. And he is going to say, “Did you get to know me yet? Maybe the desert experience wasn’t for you. But did you understand when I washed feet? Did I open your eyes in the Eucharist when you come up and say, ‘Amen.’ Because this is the food and drink that will change the whole world.”

This is what the Pope says to us during this Easter season, “If Easter is going to make any difference to us, you and I must be brothers and sisters.”

This should happen everywhere for the rich and the poor, the humble and the wealthy, for those who believe in God and those who don’t believe in God. We have to put aside our differences and we have to walk arm in arm, eye to eye, and our voices have to bring forth that spirit of our baptism. Thousands upon thousands are coming into the church across the five continents tonight. And they are saying, “I want that Jesus that you have. I want that Spirit that you have. It’s the only thing that will keep me alive.”

So tonight is Easter Vigil. We wake up in the morning and it is Easter Sunday. The Easter bunny will come, families will come together, food will be shared, grace will be shared, but in the midst of it all there is going to be a voice nagging at each one of us to really look into the eyes of our children and grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, our brothers and sisters. The eggs and candy will be gone, the food will turn into left overs, the wine bottles will be empty. And then we are just back to us — naked to one another. We all sin. But yet Jesus says, “Look into my eyes. If you look into my eyes you can see joy, love and hope. There’s nothing that will hold you down. Everything I give you will raise you up.”

So tonight, this is what you and I have come here for. We come to be renewed, to feel that spirit, to know that Jesus is truly alive. He is risen. Alleluia. He is our God forever and ever.

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