

EASTER TUESDAY REFLECTION 2021

ACTS 2:36-41

JOHN 20:11-18

When I get time I love to watch TV soap operas.

One of those shows started each episode with a narrator reminding us of what had happened on the previous day's program. The narrator would say for example, "On our previous episode, Beatrice discovered that her mother-in-law was actually her long lost sister Judy, who disappeared at the age of 6 when she was kidnapped by gypsies."

Or he would say, "When we last saw John, he was on the verge of telling Patricia about his secret life as a member of the mafia..."

I am fascinated and riveted by such narratives.

Well, the Acts of the Apostles does not have a narrator with a deep TV voice, but I am still riveted by the narrative. I almost wish that the Bible had a narrator like my soap opera TV shows. To really experience the power of the scenes after the resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles, it would help if someone said to us:

"When we last saw Peter – Saint Peter, that is – he had betrayed his best friend, Jesus. When we last saw Peter, he denied knowing Jesus – and he did that three times. When we last saw Peter, he was nowhere to be found as Jesus carried his cross and was crucified. When we last saw Peter, he was confused by the reports of the empty tomb. When we last saw Peter, he was with the other frightened disciples who had failed to stand by Jesus. He was a mess."

That was what we encountered when we last saw Peter.

But in today's episode, what do we see in Peter?

We see Peter – and the other apostles – boldly proclaiming the power of the Risen Jesus in Jerusalem. Wait a minute, when we last saw Peter, he and the others were frightened that the authorities would do to them what they had done to Jesus. But now, we see a Peter who is not afraid! He is bold. He is courageous.

We see Peter powerfully preaching the name of Jesus, and calling everyone who would listen to believe in Jesus, to follow Jesus, to fall in love with Jesus. Wait a minute, when we last saw Peter, he wouldn't even admit that he knew a guy named Jesus. Now he is boldly announcing the name of the risen Lord Jesus, right there in the same city where they had crucified Jesus. Peter will not deny Jesus again. He proclaims his name!

We see Peter, confidently teaching the truth of the resurrection. Wait a minute, when we last saw Peter he had faded from the picture as Jesus hung upon the cross. Now he is

announcing that the Jesus who died and was buried is truly alive, and that changes everything. It certainly has changed Peter!

As I reflected on the contrast between the Peter who denied Jesus and the Peter who boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus after the resurrection of Christ, I begin to wonder: what could have galvanized, overnight, a tiny group of fishermen and other disciples, all of them discredited in the eyes of the world because they were disciples of a man who had been gruesomely and publicly executed... “ I ask, “What could have been the motivating force that took hold of these men and women and transformed them into an unstoppable force that within a few years was setting the whole world ablaze?”

In other words, what explains the difference in Peter? What changed Peter, from when we last saw him - hiding and denying and anxious – to the Peter who is bold, confident and full of hope?

What’s the difference? He knew that Jesus was dead. And now he knew that Jesus was alive. Peter knew that the resurrection was real. He knew that the resurrection was the one thing on earth that could undo a crucifixion and burial. Death no longer controls human beings. Once you know that, everything has changed. We are changed.

During this period of pandemic, I have been thinking about what God wants us to learn from this strange and stressful experience we are all living through. I keep praying that we will be open to the lessons God wants us to learn. I keep hoping that we will allow the spirit of the Risen Lord to change us, according to His will.

I think that the Lord is asking us to take an honest look at the way we were living our life, back before all of this started. I think the Lord wants us to look at how easily we were distracted back then, how our priorities had become disordered, how selfish or angry or judgmental we have been. I think the Lord is asking us to look at how busy we were, and how little time we made for what mattered the most – faith, family, prayer, people, health, hygiene, service, selflessness, sense of solidarity, generosity, love and the value of brotherhood irrespective of religion, race, gender, and one status in society.

Jesus is risen. He is really alive. He is with you and me. Death does not control you or me. Nothing on earth is powerful enough to separate us from God.

Once we believe this Easter News and allow our lives to be shaped by it, then the Lord’s love can and will change us.

So let us spend some time today, being attentive to the presence of the Risen One.

May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.

Fr Patrick