

HOMILY EASTER SUNDAY 03-A (Homily 02)

“Live in Reverend Awe”

(Acts 2:14, 22b-28; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35)

A teacher asked her students if they knew what Easter was all about. One student said it was about decorating a tree and getting gifts; another started to explain that it was about getting ashes on one's head and giving up things. Disappointed, the teacher asked a third student who gave her some hope when he said that it was about when they killed Jesus and put him in a tomb. Her hopes were dashed, however, when he continued to explain that they waited around after to see if Jesus would come out and see his shadow. If he did, there would be six more weeks of winter.

On a more serious note, this third Sunday of Easter, the readings invite us to live in reverend awe.

Reverend awe - the readings today provide the reasons for that reverend awe. In the first reading, St. Peter witnesses enthusiastically to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, reminding us that the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ was always part of God's plan. Death now has no more power over Jesus. His resurrection fulfils the prophecy of David.

In the Gospel account today, we are again reminded that the Paschal Mystery is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Jesus anonymously joins the disciples on the road to Emmaus and reveals to them the passages in the Old Testament that were all about him.

Actually, the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus encapsulates the four pillars that make up the *Returning To Our Roots* Process that we have begun within the archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas. That process is based on Acts 2:42, which is a description of the life of the early Church. They were devoted to the prayers, the teachings of the apostles, the breaking of bread and fellowship or community. Our process will focus on one of those elements over the next four years, starting with prayer.

It is striking that all those elements are found in this Gospel account, which in that sense mirrors Acts 2:42. First of all, the disciples, almost without being aware of it, are at prayer. They are talking to Jesus, sharing their concerns, hopes and emotions with him, while he listens to them.

Then, Jesus speaks and reveals to them the meaning of the Old Testament prophecies that were all about him. Their hearts begin to burn within them, as the Word of God penetrates their growing understanding of who Jesus is. The second year of our process will focus on the role of scripture in our lives as an archdiocesan faith family. We will be seeking to encounter Jesus in the scriptures more fully as did those two disciples, so that our hearts will burn within us as well. This is the first Bible Study of the Christian era, and what a model for us.

Then they enter the inn and recognize Jesus in the blessing and breaking of the bread, when he vanishes from their sight. This event is an obvious invitation for us to recognize him in the Eucharist, to encounter him there. This will be the focus of the third year of our process.

Finally, the disciples, buoyed up by this unexpected encounter with the Risen Lord, overcome their fear, and return to the community of believers gathered in Jerusalem, to share their new found faith with them, and to hear how the Lord was working in their lives as well. Similarly, the last year of our process will focus on community or fellowship, helping us to share with one another our faith and our experience of the Risen Lord working in our lives. So you can see this gospel encapsulates the *Returning to our Roots* process, a process that will guide us in living out this Gospel over the next four years.

St. Paul, in the second reading, reminds us that we are in exile here on this earth. There is always more to come with Christ. He adds that we have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus, and in the light of all these marvels, we are to live in reverend awe.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is liturgically an experience of this account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are also in prayer, and during the penitential rite, we prayerfully share our burdens with the Lord and Jesus listens to us. Then, in the Liturgy of the Word which we are celebrating at this moment, Jesus truly speaks to us through the readings, opening our minds to understand the scriptures that are all about him. Shortly, we will gather around the table with Jesus as did those early disciples in the inn, and we will recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Hopefully, our hearts will be burning within us, and like those two disciples, we will rise up from this table and return to our everyday lives, forgiven, healed and transformed by our encounter with the Lord during this Eucharist, to share with others what the Lord is doing in our lives.

Realizing how this Gospel not only embodies our renewal process, but also mirrors Acts 2:42 on which that process is based, we have every reason to live in reverend awe. May the Lord bless us all as we go, like those disciples at Emmaus, to share our story with others.