

Homily  
April 23, 2023  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
25:40-35:17

I'm sure there are a number of us here who've been to a class reunion of some sort or another. How many here have been to a 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion? It's amazing. We get to that reunion and hiding in plain sight – due to age, weight, wrinkles – we don't recognize this person. And then this person relates to us a story of our high school years (if that's the one we're attending) and then our eyes are opened and we see, "Oh! Yeah! It's YOU!"

Remember the movie, *Mrs. Doubtfire*? A father, hiding behind makeup and dresses and skirts so that he could be with his children. It takes a good two hours in the movie for them to recognize him.

Or Ulysses, also known as Odysseus, that Greek hero of Homer's epics, *The Iliad and the Odyssey*. He's gone for years - at war and then wanderings. He gets home to Ithaca, and he's grizzled and older, unshaven, dirty and his own son and wife don't recognize him. And it takes a while for their eyes to be opened. Yes. Their eyes to be opened.

Now there are many of us here who have had cataract surgery, who wear glasses, contacts, cheaters. Our eyesight is not always perfect, is it? How many of us have a litter of cheaters around the house, in the car, in the garage. Or we borrow somebody's glasses because we forgot ours and we say, "Let me try yours. Maybe it will work."

And then there's that set of lenses that the optometrist or the ophthalmologist uses. It goes, "click, click, click, click," to try to find the right kind of lens for us to see, moving us toward clarity. And giving us sight that otherwise we would not have.

My brothers and sisters, our three readings today, including the Psalm, which is an echo of the First Reading, give us **lenses** of experience and faith. In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter stands up to proclaim, as it says, *something* about Jesus. The word in Greek is kerygma and the statements that he shares here, and there, are five other such discourses. Five with Peter, one with Paul. These kerygmatic discourses reveal something about the Risen One.

Peter lays it out in this first one. This is the fulfillment. This One Jesus, whom your own leaders crucified (and foreigners helped): this One has been raised from the dead. Just as David his ancestor said. And then Peter goes on to quote Psalm 16. At that time, David was considered to be the author of all the Psalms. David was the anointed one of the past and he promises, through the eyes of the risen Christ, a descendant who will be "Messiah." Through the lens of the Resurrection Peter reveals the **truth**. He says to them, "See before you what you did not know and embrace this Christ as Messiah."

The author of First Peter writes five chapters of a post-baptismal exhortation. He's writing to the newly baptized and urging them: recall where you were. Recall now, through baptism, where you are in Christ, the risen One. And seeing yourself in that way, in a whole new way, go forth to proclaim the goodness of God in Christ.

And then of course, one of the most marvelous accounts in all of the New Testament of the Resurrected One – the two companions on the Road to Emmaus. A stranger joins them and he breaks open the Word, providing them a lens to see differently. And that lens is not only Resurrection, but it is a quoting of the Scriptures they knew.

Perhaps he recalled to them the Suffering Servant Songs that we shared during Lent. Perhaps he recalled the quote he himself made in the synagogue from Isaiah Chapter 61 verse 1, “I have come to bring glad tidings to the poor; to prisoners, freedom; to those in sorrow, joy.” Perhaps he recalled to them Psalm 110, or Psalm 23, the Great Shepherd Psalm. Whatever he said, it set them to burning. But even at that, they did not recognize right away.

It wasn't until a specific action broke open their sightedness in faith. The breaking of the bread and the blessing of that bread. And then they go back to Jerusalem! To do what? To proclaim their experience of the Resurrected One and how, not only did he break open the Word, but he broke open their hearts and gave them the ability to see – even fleetingly – that it is true.

My brothers and sisters, all of us here are baptized into Christ Jesus. And in him we have been given a lens for our experiences and our faith.

Through what lens do you see life?

Through what lens do you find purpose and meaning?

What lens shapes your behaviors, your values, your passions?

Because we are Christians, that lens should be the Resurrected One. And he brings to us still, through the Church, the Word broken open - the Eucharist - Charity received and charity given - A community of believers in prayer together and on their own - Study of who he was and is, and what that means – all aimed at our hearts. Here (pointing to his heart) and here (pointing to his head), that we might burn and be willing to proclaim.

Perhaps this week would be a good time for all of us to examine the lens of this Resurrected One and its meaning in Word and Sacrament, in prayer, in community, in relationship. And by examining that lens, perhaps the proclamation to which we are called will be renewed.