

Forgiveness For the Sins of the Whole World
04/15/18

Let me begin by sharing something Nancy Baumann recently told me. She said she was so proud of both her boys, Christopher and Matthew, that, after years in faith formation programs, both having been confirmed and both being heavily involved in parish life here at St. Pat's over the years, they had finally learned a bible verse. It's Luke 24, verse 41, and we just heard it in today's Gospel passage. Let me refresh your memory, because it's pretty short and so you may have missed it. It's the verse where Jesus asked His disciples. "Do you have anything here to eat?"

Lest you think I'm making light of Chris and Matt or their parents Nancy and Jim, both young men are still growing and therefore are lean, mean, eating machines. And I was very serious when I said the guys had been heavily involved in parish life. They have both been altar servers and crucifers and have been on mission trips; I can honestly say they assisted with everything the mission trips set out to accomplish. But I can't even imagine what it takes to keep them both fed.

Fr. Joe Robinson has a wonderful reflection on this passage. He imagines that the apostles must have been in great confusion by that first Easter night. Jesus' tomb was empty. Peter and John had seen the empty tomb in the morning, but they had seen nothing else. Some women, who were Jesus' followers had talked with an angel who assured them Jesus had risen.

Mary Magdalene herself had seen our Lord and later in the day Jesus had appeared to two other disciples, had walked and talked with them, broken bread with them, and then had simply disappeared. These same disciples had just arrived at where the apostles were staying and were telling their story when Jesus suddenly appeared to all of them.

Surprised, shocked, disbelieving. Luke says terrified; Fr. Joe says they were probably more than a little embarrassed, since they had all abandoned Jesus after His arrest. Fr. Joe also wonders about the

mixed bag of emotions they must have been experiencing. Maybe that's why Jesus' first words were, "Peace be with you."

Jesus dispels their doubts about whether they could believe what they were seeing and assures them they are not seeing a ghost by inviting them to feel Him, to know He is flesh and bone. And then, to be 100% certain, He asks for a piece of fish, food they had prepared themselves, to prove He was real and that He had truly risen. But Fr. Joe reminds us Jesus was different than before.

The second reading from 1 John begins: "My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one." The Gospel passage ends by noting that "repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

This highlights one of the sad realities of life after baptism, that sin can once again easily find a place in our lives. We're all human beings and as such, we are all sinners. Every one of us. As Archbishop Flynn would frequently tell people, every one of us sins, yes even the Archbishop. But as John reminds us, we have Jesus Christ as our Advocate. And He is the expiation or atonement for the sins of the whole world.

Let me finish with a short reflection from Fr. Paul Colloton, a reflection I completely resonated with. He says he had celebrated Mass often throughout his life, early on as a server and choir member, among other things, and now as the presider. Too often he takes his need for repentance for granted. He, like the rest of us, is in need of God's healing, as together we say we are not worthy to have Jesus enter under our roofs.

In the end, we should be just as joy-filled as those first disciples as we receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Joy-filled and grateful that, as sinners, Jesus allows us to receive Him.