

April 14, 2024 – Third Sunday in Easter

**“The Living Christ is not a Ghost or a Blank Patch
on our Lives” by Pastor Julio Romero**

Reading: Acts 3:12-26

Today’s first reading reminds me of a story about a painting in the Berlin art gallery by the famous artist Mengel that is only partially finished.

It is supposed to be a painting of King Frederick of Germany talking to his generals. The King was left until last, leaving a bare patch in the middle of the painting with the background of generals. But Mengel died before he could finish the painting, so there is a painting full of generals but no king.

This painting is a reminder that we Christians can spend so much time putting all the generals, things of insignificance or personal desires, first, and leave the King of Kings last or not in the picture of our lives at all.

This was the message Peter gave to the people in Jerusalem who were coming into the Temple when they saw Peter heal a man who had not walked since his birth.

First he reminded them of the fathers of their faith, then he refreshed their memories of what they did to our Lord Jesus. He told them of the Lord’s resurrection and who Jesus is, and that the miracle of making the man walk was not Peter’s work, but was the work of the Risen Christ, the person they condemned and crucified. But then Peter said to them, this is the time to make Jesus, the man you mocked, laughed at and crucified, your only King and centre of your life.

What came after that was Peter’s exhortation to the very people who handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate and didn’t believe in him or have any faith in him.

Here, Peter is telling them that the miracle they saw was not the result of his own work, but the work done through the power of Jesus’ name; it wasn’t done in Peter’s or in John’s name but in the name of Jesus.

Peter knew the healing power of the risen Lord; he also knew that to have a complete life, the Resurrected King has to be at the centre of it.

The Lord Jesus said to Thomas and to all his disciples, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”*.

Peter, John and the rest of disciples were witnesses of the resurrection. We can say it was easy for them to believe, because they saw the resurrected Jesus; they had breakfast with him, they had a conversation with him, they felt his breath as he breathed on them the Holy Spirit, they felt his embrace. Because of this, I would say that it was easy for the disciples to put the resurrected Jesus at the centre of their life.

They saw him dead and then alive again. Jesus was no longer a blank patch or a ghost in the picture of their lives, but he was flesh and bones, fully present among them. Their faith in Him was founded on the solid ground of his resurrection. There was more than just faith; there was their commitment to follow the resurrected Jesus, the Living God. There was the will to take the Gospel to all corners of the world, there was the conviction to sacrifice their lives and everything else because of their love for God and faith in the Living Christ.

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”.

The blessing of the disciples came when they made the Living God the centre of their lives.

None of us has seen the Risen Lord and yet we have come to believe that He is the Son of the Living God, our Saviour, and because we believe, we are blessed. Everyone who does believe is a blessed person: blessed to have a relationship with God, blessed to live with the belief of eternal life, blessed to know deep in our hearts that in Jesus we are free from sin and that we are saved and part of God’s plan in the redemption of the world.

The blessings of having Jesus at the centre of our lives come in different ways. One of them is to grow a thankful heart. Peter was convinced that the healing miracle he performed was not his work but the work of Jesus. We should also realize that all that is good in our lives, which can sometimes be busy, messy or complicated, is a gift from God and the best way to acknowledge those gifts or blessings is to look at the hidden blessings.

In a reflection told by Todd Catteau, he said:

“One of my favorite books of the Bible is Proverbs. While reading through it the other day I came across a line that spoke to my messy life. It was in Proverbs 14:4, that says ‘Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean.’ Then he went on to say “It puzzled me at first, but after some thinking I figured that maybe having a messy life is not as bad as I thought.

I don't have a manger; I have never raised an animal, but it's common sense that if you do raise animals and rely on them to get work done, then you're bound to have a mess or two to clean up. A clean manger may be nice, but without the messy ox you're not going to get much work done! No messes mean no work. No messes mean no crops. Maybe the sage is telling us that when you step in that mess instead of complaining, you can be thankful that you have that ox who made that mess!

The mess means you have an ox! The loads of laundry mean you have clothes! The dirty dishes mean you have food! The toys mean you have the company of children! The clutter means that life is happening all around you! The messes around us more often than not, are the aftereffect of God's blessings in our lives."

Sometimes life can be complicated, difficult, a real mess, but there are hidden blessings behind those moments for which we need to be thankful.

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

For the disciples and for us, Jesus is not a blank patch in the picture of our lives. The Living Christ is not a ghost either; He is real, the centre of our lives and source of the big, small and hidden blessings. He heals us, gives us peace, guides us and gives us hope that at the end all will be fine and well with us, well with our souls, as one of my favourites hymns says.

Another way to show thankfulness for Jesus' blessings is to emulate the commitment, conviction, and willingness to carry on with his ministry of love as Peter, John and the other disciples did. **Amen.**