

III EASTER 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

1 ST PETER 2.11 ST. JOHN 16.16

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“Listen”...Jesus tells his Disciples...“Listen to what I am saying. This is good-bye for now. Do not worry...I will be back...even if only for a little while...before I have to go away again”.

There are many kinds of good-byes. Some are almost casual...the after-Coffee-Hour good-byes we say to each other...they come with the expectation we will see each other again next week...or certainly very soon.

Other good-byes contain both happy and sad elements...a son going off to college...a daughter getting married...a life-long friend moving across country for a new job...we may see them again...perhaps not very soon or often.

Then there are the good-byes of a more permanent nature. When the company I worked for closed its doors...there were many tearful good-byes in those last few days...some of us almost certain we would not see each other again...uncertain of what the future would bring.

And there are the good-byes we say at the Requiem Mass for a friend or family member who has died. They are the good-byes filled with hope Saint Paul writes is the expectation for that which we have not yet experienced first hand...we will see our friends and loved ones again. Be certain of it.

Jesus begins the process of saying good-bye at his Transfiguration. His public ministry has concluded and by all accounts was a dismal failure. Peter, James and John, his closest friends, witness Jesus in his glorified body...and they want to hold on to the moment. But this is the moment Jesus accepts the difficult task ahead...whatever the personal cost...for the redemption of all humanity.

At the Last Supper...on the night before he died...Jesus talks about his impending death. It is a long good-bye speech intended to fill his Disciples with hope. The Disciples do not understand what Jesus means when he tells them he is leaving them for a little while...and a little while later he will return and they will see him again.

Jesus tells them a story...his leaving for a little while is like a mother giving birth...first there is the pain of childbirth...then when her baby is born...the pain is forgotten and replaced by happiness and joy. The Disciples do not understand what Jesus means by this either. What they want is for Jesus to not go away.

Jesus tries to reassure his Disciples...they will be sad when they see him killed...uncertain of what is going to happen next. They will be happy when they see him again Easter morning. They do not understand what he means when he tells them he will leave again...and this time it is for their own good. He was getting them ready just as we are getting ourselves ready for his departure back to heaven on the Ascension Day.

Jesus' departure comes with a promise...“I will be back...do not worry”. It is a waste of time trying to figure out when Jesus will return. It is dangerous to listen to people who claim to have special knowledge about Jesus' return because they are obsessed with the destructive and evil forces in the world. What we must do is make the best use of this time of waiting by paying attention to what Saint Peter tells us we should be doing...God's will...by loving each other and by doing good works.

We should not be sad because Jesus hasn't yet returned. Far from it! We are glad he went back to heaven so the Holy Spirit could come and infuse our lives with power and renewed hope. Our time now should be a dynamic and active time of spreading the Good News...waiting for Jesus to return.

Until that time we have work to do and we should be happy about the tasks ahead of us...whatever they might be. We get strength from knowing we are not alone...Jesus is present in the Words of Scripture...in the Eucharist...in our lives together...in the Community called Saint Joseph Parish.

Jesus promises us when he returns he will take all who believe in him to heaven. We will see him and our friends and loved ones again. We will live forever in the presence of God the Father. We will never have to say good-bye...to anyone...ever again!

We will have peace and joy and happiness beyond anything we can imagine...never to be taken away.

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