

III EASTER 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

1 ST PETER 2.11-17 ST. JOHN 16.16-22

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“Get ready...in a little while I’m going away and you won’t see me...then you will see me again for a little while...then I’m going away to the Father and you won’t see me any more...but I will return to take you where I am...in a little while.”

The Gospel readings from now until Pentecost take us back to Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper. The focus of the readings is less on the Resurrection and more on the next two big events in the life of Jesus...and in the Liturgical Life of Saint Joseph Parish...the Ascension and Pentecost.

For the next several weeks, Jesus tells his disciples to get themselves ready because he is going to have to leave them...the first departure is His death...which will cause them great sorrow and make them cry...but the world will celebrate because it will think Jesus is dead and gone forever.

When we hear this and the other Holy Week stories we have the advantage of knowing how things turn out...exactly as Jesus said they would. That wasn’t the case with his disciples...we can easily imagine their confusion as they asked themselves, “What does all this going away for a little while and we won’t see him and then in a little while we will see him again mean? What is he talking about? We don’t get it!”

Things get ever more confusing when Jesus tells them their sadness will be like a mother who is in labor...the pain of childbirth is quickly forgotten when the baby is born...it becomes a celebration of a new birth and new life. Jesus is telling them their sorrow at seeing him die would be quickly forgotten when they saw him again after his Resurrection. Resurrection brings new life!

The second event in the Gospel...Jesus is preparing the disciples for his second and final departure...when the “little while” of seeing him after his Resurrection would come to an end ...they would walk with him to a hillside outside of town and watch him get taken up into heaven in a cloud surrounded by bright light.

Jesus promised his disciples he would return one day...they should not be sad and cry but look forward to his return...and he will not leave them alone to figure things out on their own...he will send them a Helper that will fill them with hope and expectation...and everything they have witnessed and everything he said about why he had to go back to heaven...would begin to make sense. The Helper is the Holy Spirit...he helps us figure things out too.

The Holy Spirit helps us understand Jesus’ contention the time we are waiting for him to return is like a woman in labor. Saint Paul reinforces this when he writes in his Letter to the Romans it’s not just human beings but all of Creation...up until the present time...groans with pain like the pain of childbirth. The labor of childbirth hurts but will not last forever.

We should think of the “labor” we are going through now during this lifetime of waiting for Jesus to reappear...as the time for us to stay busy doing God’s work...the kind of work Saint Peter tells us to do in the Epistle. This IS our “little while” time of waiting. We can be certain it will not last forever...but heaven will.

We don’t want to waste our time just sitting around doing nothing...we want our time to be productive. We want to be doing what pleases God...we want to be helping others...we want to be living the Good News! We will then be ready for what Saint Peter calls the “day of God’s visitation.”

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus promises he will come back soon. We’re eager for this to happen...and we tell Jesus to hurry up. But exactly when Jesus returns is not for us to know or try to guess. That would be an exercise in futility. Jesus will come back when he is ready...according to God’s timetable...not ours.

Jesus promises when he returns our hearts will be filled with gladness, the kind of gladness that no one can take away from us.

In the meantime...we will have to wait patiently for Jesus to return...for a little while longer!

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