

III Easter 2022

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*1 St. Peter 2.11-17 St. John 16.16-24*

✠

Our hearts will be filled with gladness...the kind of gladness that no one can take away from us...powerful words of assurance from our friend Jesus.

The Gospels for this Sunday and the next few Sundays take us back to Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper. Jesus is saying “good-bye” to his disciples. He is trying to get them ready for the fact he is about to leave them.

Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. He has told them several times he must suffer, die and rise again. This is not something his disciples want to hear and quite frankly...they don't believe him. During our Holy Week liturgies...we don't want to believe our friend Jesus...God's Son...has to die.

Jesus tells his disciples in a little while they will not see him any more, and then a little while later they will see him. The disciples are confused about what Jesus means by a “little while” of not seeing him and then a “little while” of seeing him again.

Jesus is actually talking about two separate “little whiles”. The first is the time after his death when they won't see him...and then they will see him again on Easter Day. The second is the time after the Ascension when he goes back to heaven...and they won't see him until the Last Day...when they and we will see him again.

Of course, Jesus knows his disciples are confused and the thought of being separated from him is painful to them. They love him and they want him to stick around...not leave them. He tells them they will cry when he leaves them but the world will think they have defeated him. Later on he will tell them the world will make them...and us...suffer. But we are to be brave! He has defeated the world!

Jesus wants his disciples...and us...to know our sadness at not seeing him will not last. He tells the story about a woman who is giving birth to a child. The suffering...the pain she endures during the birth of the child will not last. When the baby is born...she forgets the

pain and is happy to hold her new son or daughter. That is the kind of happiness that can never be taken away from the mother.

Jesus told his disciples earlier the Holy Spirit was coming and he would make everything clear to them. The Holy Spirit would open their eyes...and ours...to the truth about what he had been telling them all along. They would understand Jesus wasn't giving them a lesson in childbirth. I'm a man...and I can never experience what a woman goes through giving birth to a child. But I do understand the “pain” of being separated from the people we love...and how happy we are to see them again.

The Epistle is Saint Peter's instructions on how we can best use this time of waiting for Jesus to return. He calls us strangers and refugees in this world. The world is not our true home...heaven is...and we want Jesus to return and takes us there.

In the early Church it was the general population comprised of pagans...not governments...that persecuted Christians. Peter tells us we should conduct ourselves as God's children and do good deeds even when we find ourselves ridiculed. Even pagans (or non believers) couldn't criticize the good deeds.

Peter does make it clear we are to obey the civil authorities. We may not agree with our elected officials. We may even criticize foreign governments. We must always remember God created order out of chaos. All governments exist because God likes order and they provide order. Peter warns us we must never use the freedom we have as God's children to do evil deeds. We must live as his children...love each other...give God the reverence due him...and respect the government.

We are now in a “little while” of waiting for Jesus to return that has lasted 2000 years. We're anxious for Jesus to return. It is our urgent prayer in the Book of Revelation...“Come, Lord Jesus!” We don't know when Jesus will return...it will be according to God's timetable...not ours.

In the meantime...our hearts are already filled with gladness...the kind of gladness that no one can take away from us.

✠