

Homily for Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021

Readings: Acts 10: 34a, 37-43; Colossians 3: 1-4; John 20: 109

Preacher: Gloria Ulterino

“Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?”
And we respond: “I do, so help me, God.” These are familiar words, especially for any of us who have been on the witness stand in court.

Today is Easter Sunday, the ultimate day for each of us to witness to the whole, abiding, and entire truth: the healing love of God is for *all* people. Everyone. Everywhere. No exceptions.

What a surprise that was for Peter! In today’s First Reading we find Peter at the home of a Gentile, named Cornelius. Clearly a story of God’s doing, the Jewish Peter would *never* have imagined going to the Gentile Cornelius. Despite the fact that Cornelius was devout, prayerful, and caring of all others. For in Peter’s eyes, he was a *Gentile*, above all else. And yet, God’s truth finally dawned on Peter, some of which is left out of our reading. Listen to these words of Peter, found in the Acts of the Apostles, but left out of our Lectionary: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.”

What a surprise for some of *us*, as well, in the time of Covid 19! We have certainly witnessed that a nasty, death-dealing virus knows no boundaries, no borders. On the contrary, it has infected people worldwide, everywhere, no exceptions. The greater, more complete truth is becoming increasingly obvious: we are all in this—and everything else—together, no exceptions. We are connected, worldwide. Increasingly, we are able to proclaim: our God is for *everyone*. God’s healing love is for *all* of us. Everywhere. No exceptions.

Where have we witnessed to that truth? There is, of course, the vaccine, the antidote to this dreadful virus. Not just one vaccine, but now several, at the hands and hearts of so many dedicated scientists who have labored, day in and day out, producing an antidote much sooner than most of us thought possible. By

being vaccinated, we, too, can participate in this healing, for which we profoundly yearn. Indeed, we *are* in this together!

On a personal note, I have experienced this truth in so many different ways. For example, I just finished writing a book that has been years in the making. But I was unable to send it off to the publisher without the assistance of a very good friend. Not only does she understand theology, she is also a fine editor and is familiar with formatting work, enough to send off this work for publication. I could *never* have done it alone. No, we're in this together!

Finally, I can—and I *must*—proclaim that today's Gospel leaves out the ultimate truth of Easter Sunday: *that Jesus is alive, for us all!* (For today's passage stops short of the *total* story, completed in John 20:11-18.)

Mary of Magdala is the only one who stayed at the tomb through the horrible death of Good Friday and the silence of Holy Saturday. She is the first to know the early-Sunday-morning truth: the tomb is empty! Totally distraught, Mary dashes off to Peter and the "beloved disciple": "Come! Quickly!" As they enter the empty tomb, we're simply told this: Peter is befuddled. And this: *the beloved disciple "saw and believed."* But, *what* did he believe? We are not told! It is Mary *alone* who remains, because she *must*, out of love. *Mary*, then, is first to encounter the risen Christ *alive!* Not only that, he has commanded her to proclaim, preach, and witness on his behalf: "Go, tell my brothers." And we, the Roman Catholic Church in this country, leave out this *essential* truth on Easter Sunday, of all days! As a church, we *must* proclaim the whole truth! God's powerfully healing, death-defying truth is for *all* people. No exception. Not only that, *anyone* alive with the truth of Easter can proclaim that truth today.

Yes, just like Mary of Magdala, a woman. For God's unending, undying love is for us all!

If Easter is about anything, it is about this ultimate truth. The God of Jesus is very much alive, here and now. Bursting open all our narrow, carefully-locked doors to a much greater truth: we are *all* daughters and sons of this One, Life-Giving God, for the good of us all. To *that* truth, we *must* witness.