

III Easter 2024  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
*St. John 16.16-24*



***Jesus tells us everything he has told us was so his joy may be in us, and our joy may be complete.***

This morning's Gospel and those for the next two Sundays take us back to the time just before Jesus was arrested. His disciples experienced great joy being in his presence. They walked and talked with him. They witnessed his miracles.

Jesus knew his execution day was coming. He had been trying to explain to his friends his way to the Father was through a gruesome and humiliating crucifixion. They were confused and saddened by what he said and didn't believe it would come true.

Jesus tells his disciples he is going to leave them and go to the Father...and he tells them he is going to die. How could this news possibly bring them anything but sorrow? He tells them it is to their advantage he goes away, otherwise the Helper will not come to them. And when the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide them into all truth. Their sorrow at not having Jesus physically present will be short-lived.

When his friends saw Jesus crucified and die on the cross, they thought their world had come to an end. They experienced true sorrow...while the soldiers and others laughed at Jesus because they thought they had gotten rid of him for good. Jesus tells his friends their sorrow at seeing him die would be short...in a "little while" he would be back...then their sorrow would turn in to joy. Jesus' death on the cross was the event that produced the new joy they have and we have now.

Jesus then tells a short story about a woman in labor. The real pain she experiences is short-lived too...quickly forgotten when the baby is born. Now she experiences real joy...beyond anything she could have imagined. The labor pains the mother went through didn't just come before the child was born...it was the event that produced her new joy.

There is another lesson in the story about the woman who is in labor. Jesus wants us to know the evil that exists in the world will sometimes cause us pain like a woman in labor. He tells us, yes, there will be tribulation in our lifetime. But the world that makes us so sorrowful will not have the last word. Jesus is the last word.

Even in a world where hatred and destruction, political turmoil, social unrest, and financial messes, cause us pain and uncertainty...they cannot take away our joy or hope. We have the Helper...the Holy Spirit...Jesus promised he would send to lead us into all truth. We know our own labor pains will be short-lived.

The disciples were sad when Jesus went back to the Father...but they soon learned this was a good thing...they would soon be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the work they were called to do. They longed for the day Jesus would come back and they would see him again. They also understood this would happen according to God's timetable...not ours. The Holy Spirit helps us understand that even though we can't see Jesus with our eyes at this very moment, we experience his love and joy through the Holy Spirit.

We're still in a "little while" time of waiting for Jesus to come back. While we are waiting for Jesus to return, we should ask God to increase the faith we received at our baptism and reinforced at our confirmation. And it is that faith that gets re-energized by hearing his Word and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ at every Mass.

Jesus promised he will never leave us alone. He said he is always with us in Spirit and in Truth today and every day of our lives until the end of time. We look forward with hope and expectation for the end of our "little while" of waiting. But we have no reason to be sad or anxious.

***Jesus tells us everything he has told us was so his joy may be in us, and our joy may be complete. And the joy we have is complete and can never be taken away!***

