

III Easter 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

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



Sadness and gladness...are the themes of this morning's Gospel. 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 again. We can sense the disciples' confusion as they talk among themselves what Jesus means by a "little while"

Today's Gospel reading and those for the next two Sundays take us back to Maundy Thursday and the Last Supper. They are part of a much longer talk Jesus has with his disciples to prepare them for what was next: his crucifixion and death when they will not see him for a little while; his Resurrection when they will see him for a little while longer; his Ascension back to heaven and they will not see him again; and the coming of the Helper (the Holy Spirit) who will make all things clear to them and give them strength.

Jesus tells his disciples they will be sad and cry during the times they cannot see him...but only for a little while. Their pain and suffering will be like a mother in labor. She is sad because of the pain and suffering she is experiencing...but she knows it will only last a little while...and she will forget all about the pain and suffering and be happy once she holds her baby in her arms.

We might be tempted to ask what do Jesus (even though he is the Son of God) and the disciples know about childbirth...after all they are men? In the Old Testament, Isaiah and Jeremiah write both the hardships of God's people and the anguish God feels over seeing his people suffer are like a woman who is in labor. But God will transform the world by actively participating in a work of new creation...and ultimately make life better for his people...and they will no longer remember their suffering.

Isaiah talks about a "suffering servant" who was sent on a mission from God to suffer on the behalf of others. He will be "lifted high up" (on the Cross) and exalted. Jesus is that suffering servant who has cemented a New Covenant with us through his passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension, and has filled us with God's Holy Spirit, and given us New Life and hope.

Our New Life in Jesus begins at our baptism, when as the Collect puts it we “are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s Religion”. When we were baptized the Holy Spirit changed us from the inside out. He lets us see Jesus for who he really is. He helps us understand that even though we can’t see Jesus with our eyes at this very moment, we experience his love for us through Word and Sacrament and the lives of those who truly believe what he said, “And I will be with you always, to the end of time”. We don’t know when that end of time will occur. God has his own timetable for working things out.

We have to trust God and have patience, and pay attention to Peter’s instructions in the Epistle. He reminds us our true home is in heaven; we are only “strangers and refugees in this world.” We need to conduct ourselves as God’s children...and do good deeds that give praise to him.

Peter tells us we are to obey civil authorities because they provide order and justice in society. We may not always agree with them...but we must always pray God will inspire our civic leaders to do what is right and pleasing to him. Above all, Peter warns us, we must not use our freedom in Christ to cover up evil deeds, but always remember we serve God and others. Our lives must always lead others to Christ and the Cross.

We have now been in a 2000 year “little while” time of waiting. We look forward with hope and expectation for the end of our “little while” of waiting, and we pray that will be soon. We shouldn’t be sad because Jesus hasn’t yet returned. We should be happy he went back to heaven and sent the Holy Helper to guide us and strengthen our Faith.

Pope Saint John Paul II was known for telling people...especially young people...not to be afraid...to draw on the example of Jesus Christ...and to have courage and faith in times of adversity. Jesus told his disciples the little while time of waiting would cause them to be sad...but the world would be glad...because it thought Jesus was gone forever. We know better. We know how the story will turn out.

We know Jesus will return some day. Whatever sadness we feel now...whatever challenges we face in the world...will not last. Our “little while” time of waiting will one day come to an end. And the great joy and gladness we will have on that day can never be taken away.

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