

## Homily Easter - 7 2019

The USPS has an email service called "Informed Delivery." Each day between 7:30 and 8 am I get an email from the postal service with images of the mail that I will be getting that day. Some of the stuff is pretty familiar: bills, catalogs, newspapers, but then there are the envelopes with a return address, sometimes known, sometimes not. Whenever I see the unfamiliar, I wonder what's in the envelope just like one would when picking up the mail. Is it a cleverly hidden ad, perhaps an invitation, maybe a complaint, or a question or a thank-you. Lots of possibilities. The envelope tells a message, but the full message is found only inside.

Well, believe it or not, we have something like that in today's gospel. Jesus is giving a message, an invitation. What we hear is part of his farewell speech to his apostles. The words are clear, but only in time, after they have unwrapped it will they understand more fully the message. Basically, Jesus' message is an R.S.V.P.....one that requires a response on our part...even though we don't know what will happen after we accept the invitation. It's like an invitation to a party from someone we do not know, but we accept just the same.

In the first reading, Stephen had accepted the invitation from Christ. He was a dedicated follower. However, he ended up by losing his life and suffering. Being a disciple of Jesus can mean suffering for our faith. In fact, I recently heard a statement that there have been more martyrs for Christianity in the 20th century than there were in the first 100 years of the Church. Martyrdom and suffering did not end in the early Church. It has continued and still continues to this very day. People suffer merely because they are Christians. We may think that Christian suffering occurs only elsewhere, but it occurs even in our own country. Our Catholic values are challenged on a regular basis. Some Catholics will stand up for what we believe, but others just give in and go with the flow.

Think again about the invitation from Christ. The invitation is asking us to make Christ present in our lives and in our society. That invitation means that we teach our children the faith, that we share what we have, that we reach out to those in need, and that we forgive even when we have been wronged. We cannot fulfill this invitation if we are not nourishing our lives with prayer, with the celebration of the Eucharist. Without those elements, especially the Eucharist, we will not have food for the journey.

Jesus sends each one of us an invitation to make him present. Invitations come to us in envelopes that we have to open. For Jesus, we

need to open our hearts to see, hear and accept the invitation. When Jesus calls, make sure that you send an enthusiastic affirmative R.S.V.P. to that invitation.