

Deacon Jim Thompson (Luke 24: 35-48) April 18, 2021

I have a simple question today for each and everyone of you and I believe it's important for you to answer this question honestly and sincerely. This is not a question that I or anyone else here needs to know the answer to. This is a question to ask yourself and understand that how you respond is between you and God.

The question is what did the readings and the Gospel speak to you in your heart today?

You may say to yourself this is not a fair question and you might get discouraged and think why is he asking me this, but it is not my intent to question whether or not you were paying attention or whether you heard and didn't understand.

The purpose of this question is to open up the possibility of what you might be missing here today. Something that if you considered and prayed about before coming to Mass could change the way you look at certain situations in your life. What part of the liturgy of the word could be feeding your desire to be closer to God?

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The Church has understood from the very beginning the need to pass on the words of the Old and New Testaments. Without this knowledge of our ancestors, we could never learn from their wisdom or from their mistakes.

History whether religious or secular is filled with many lessons for us. I can't believe that some extremists would like to wipe out our nation's history. We know that religious liberty is becoming more and more threatened by extreme thinking in this country and we can see it in our young and what they are being taught in our public schools.

It's interesting to see how many mistakes have been repeated over and over since the fall of Adam and Eve.

So why is scripture so important? Let's ponder the words of St Jerome who said "ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ".

Is it necessary for us to memorize scripture? Do we need to be able to recite scripture when asked?

I don't think most of us, myself included, would be up to that task, but aren't we blessed to have so many scripture scholars that can help us find the answers we need.

So let's take a look at the readings today and see what we might discover.

In the first reading today Peter is preaching to the Jews who may have been in the crowd, the ones who were calling for his crucifixion, but he is not condemning them nor is he forgiving them because of their ignorance. What he is offering them is a chance to repent and be forgiven for their ignorance, and giving them the opportunity to be converted.

Remember the words of Jesus on the cross, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do". "

They know not what they do."

The secular world is telling us today that short of murder there is no sin.

There is nothing that we need to be ashamed of or justify as long as it serves our personal needs.

Can we seriously put our personal needs above all others? It's hard to believe that people can be that selfish and self-serving.

What Peter is telling the Jews and all of us is that we have a God that will wipe away our sins if we are willing to repent and ask for forgiveness.

Who but our God can do that for us?

We are all sinners. It's in our human nature since the fall of Adam and Eve.

Listen to what St John tells us in the second reading. "My children, I am writing this so that you may not commit sin". Notice he doesn't say if you commit sin, but so you may not commit sin. John is trying to steer us away from sin, but he also reminds us in the next verse; "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one"

The way we act out there in the world really does make a difference.

When the world looks at us, we want them to see Jesus looking back at them. Not from our own self-righteousness but from the love that Jesus has placed in our hearts.

My brothers and sisters we don't hear often enough from the pulpit about the devastating effects of sin and that is a shame because we can't teach our children not to sin if we don't teach them what is right and what is wrong. Our children look to us for guidance. We don't need government to raise our children. That is our responsibility. At baptism the priest or deacon will ask the parents and godparents if they are willing to make a commitment to bring up their children in the faith.

Your "I do" is more than just a response, it's an obligation, and it's the priest and deacons responsibility to remind you of this in our peaching.

John tells us this today at the end of this Gospel when he quotes the words of Jesus. "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that the repentance, for the

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forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”.

We all struggle with sin in our lives. Jesus offers us redemption for our sins and that is a message that we can take away from today’s readings and pass that on to our children. It’s not the only message in the readings, but it is a vital message.

I offered a challenge a while back. I asked that you take some time to read the Sunday readings ahead of time so that you can ponder the message you are hearing in the Mass. I would like to challenge you again but this time I would like to hear from more of you. You can speak to me after Mass or you can send me an email.

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So let me ask you the same question I asked when I started my homily today...What did the readings and the Gospel speak to you in your heart today?