

HOMILY FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN EASTER (DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY)

2022

In addressing his disciples with peace, the very next thing Jesus did was to reveal his wounds. If we imagined peace was the avoidance of wounds, we would be mistaken. Our wounds are the story of our lives which God redeems in Christ. They are a part of our story but, they are not the end of our story.

“Peace be with you,” said before and after the revelation of Jesus’ wounds, announces an acceptance of woundedness. It is with peace that Jesus presents himself once more to Thomas, who actually sees the wounds and is invited to put his finger and hand into the wounds.

‘During COVID, I learnt to eat an apple without leaving any waste.’

This does sound like a statement from the television programme, “Would I lie to You?” A show where identities present statements and the opposing team has to decide whether it is a truth or a lie. Ironically, my interest in eating an apple in a different way came from the much older, original British programme of the same name. A comedian stated that he ate an apple from the bottom up and consumed the core and the seeds because the bulk of the flesh of the apple, overwhelmed the less appealing presence of the core and seeds. His opponents said that he was lying. He was actually telling the truth.

So, on the principle that the truth will set me free, I tried it. Instead of putting my finger and thumb in the top and bottom of the apple and eating around the core and then, wondering what to do with the core - when you attack an apple from the bottom or the top, the core and seeds are hardly noticed because the goodness of the flesh around, overwhelms everything.

In this Octave of Easter - a time of glorying in the resurrection of Jesus Christ – we highlight that the effects of sin have been completely diminished. This is a time where God’s mercy, having justly condemned a broken humanity to death because of our connection to Adam, revealed the plan to bring a broken humanity to life, because of our connection to Jesus. How sadly, many, even those who call themselves ‘Christian’, are more at home in their connection to Adam than they are to Christ. You wonder sometimes why he bothered.

Yet, the flesh of our Christian faith is that we consume that part of life which is unpalatable, sour and appears to be waste, because everything is overwhelmed by the resurrection. This has always meant to be the experience of the Church.

The first reading showed how the first disciples, at the risk of being treated like Jesus themselves by the Jewish authorities, congregated publicly in the cloisters of the temple. By being overwhelmed by the resurrection, they simply cared for people who were considered waste. They enabled Peter to carry on Christ’s ministry of healing. There is nothing out of place here with who we are to be.

John of the Apocalypse experienced of himself, being nothing more than waste when he was exiled to Patmos but, even here, apart from the companionship of other

Christians, he was overwhelmed with the flavour of resurrection when a world was revealed to him which seemed so foreign to this world – a world of angels and the defeat of evil.

The core of our life, that which is sour and unpalatable, continues to come as waste - Russian cruelty to the Ukrainians; the effects of natural disasters coming at unprecedented rates; our ongoing struggle with death and grief, violence and abuse. Yet, by faith, this is overwhelmed by the resurrection which is the flesh which encompasses all of this. Jesus affirms this when he appears to his disciples with his wounds.

Even Thomas, who had a reputation of always being negative about everything, had to succumb to the flesh of the resurrection.

We are easily drawn into thinking that the core of life is all about us – our suffering and our struggles and that this is all we are.

However, when we eat the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist, Jesus overwhelms us with the flesh of resurrection.

You decide whether it is a truth or a lie.