



April 18, 2010 The Third Sunday of Easter

"...Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John do you love me more than these?'" John 21:15

Dear Friends;

For me one of the comforting characters in the New Testament is that of Peter. Peter comes through as a real person. He is not some sort of anemic, pale, plaster of Paris statue, but a man with gifts and talents as well as faults and foibles much like our own.

Peter is always impetuous he says things without thinking it through. He argues with Jesus about Jesus' prediction of the cross. Jesus rebukes him "Get behind me you Satan, you are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Mark 8:33)

In the Gospel of John, Peter denies Jesus three times during the arrest and trial of Jesus. All this comes from the "rock" (who Catholics call the first pope) upon which Jesus would build his Church.

But Peter was also capable of many acts of deep faith and love. He confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus tells him that it was God who revealed this to him and then Jesus calls him "rock." At the Last Supper Peter tells Jesus that he would die for Jesus. Then Jesus predicts Peter's threefold denial.

Many scripture scholars tell us that the risen Jesus' three time question to Peter, "Do you love me" represents an opportunity to reverse his denials. And then Jesus invites him into the work of shepherding and guiding the work of the Kingdom. All is forgiven and Jesus entrusts his mission to Peter and the disciples.

We are all aware that we the Church have fallen short of the mission that Jesus has entrusted to us. We are also painfully aware that the leadership of the Church—the bishops—successors to the apostles have not all tended the sheep wisely or well. This is evident from the scandal that is now shaking the Church from the USA, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Germany and Rome itself.

This should not surprise us if we understand that the Church is both holy and human. The Church is holy because its founder Jesus is holy. It is holy because it strives to inspire all to live out the call to universal love and holiness. The church is holy because the Holy Spirit is present healing, forgiving and sanctifying us.

But the Church is human in that it is made up of people—men and women—who are human and also sinful. The Church is made up of people who are complex humans like Peter. We are all a mixture of light and dark, good and bad and we are redeemed and yet in need of redemption. It is not healthy to place anyone beyond criticism.

It is important to protect the weakest and most vulnerable especially children. We must remove those who are a danger to others. We must make structural changes to that which promotes unhealthy attitudes of power, secrecy and human sexuality.

We need more transparency in Church governance. It is therefore important for us to hold each other accountable both laity and hierarchy. Child predators need to be removed and prosecuted. Those who have seriously or criminally neglected their responsibilities to protect the flock should be removed. And the Church needs to continue to ask for forgiveness for not always living up to the Gospel of Christ.

Finally it is important for us to pray for one another. None of us is without sin. And all of us need to take active responsibility for helping tend and feed the flock of Jesus Christ.

Peace

Fr Ron