

Homily--Peace and Forgiveness

April 19, 2009

Terry and Fred Quinn

Terry-----Two things jumped out at me as I envisioned this scene. The first is Jesus saying, "Peace be to you." Can't you almost hear him saying those consoling words? He said them three times. In the Hebrew tradition, when emphasizing something, it was said three times---like "Holy, Holy , Holy. "

The second is how Thomas must have felt. I think I understand Thomas because I too am "high anxiety" ----and I'm usually the skeptic, wanting to "check things out." Some of you may relate to that same anxiety and skepticism. But, think, how we, like Thomas are consoled and feel almost to our very bones the peaceful message of Jesus. It's as if he's telling the apostles "Let it go—the horror of the last few days----focus on what has opened, not closed---focus on my transcendence to new life---focus on the indwelling of the Spirit bringing peace each day. He doesn't censure Thomas for his skepticism. He merely grants his request. He does affirm those who believe without first-hand experience, but he doesn't condemn Thomas because he needs extra reassurance. No-he says, "Peace be to you" ---and he also says, "the Spirit is with You" and "You are forgiven." Jesus' followers felt his continuing presence and recognized the same Spirit that they had known in him during his historical life---they felt the essence of his peace and healing and certain forgiveness. -----as is evident in today's reading from Acts where we hear about a united and peaceful community who knew the presence of the spirit among them.-----and now Fred has a story about listening for the echoes of peace and forgiveness in our everyday lives.

One day a man who lived in the country came to the city to have lunch with his friend. They were walking along toward a

restaurant they had chosen. It was approaching noon as they walked down one of the busiest streets. There were all sorts of noises in the city...cabs were honking their horns, you could hear feet shuffling and people talking. And amid all this noise the visitor turned to his friend and said, "I hear a cricket."

"No way," answered the city man. "You couldn't possibly hear a cricket with all of this noise. You must be imagining it. Besides, I've never seen a cricket in the city."

"No, really---I really do hear a cricket. I'll show you. He stopped for a moment then when the light changed, lead his friend across the street, and walked over to large cement planter with a tree in it. And there beneath the leaves was a cricket.

"That's amazing" The city man said. You must have super-human hearing. What's your secret? "

"No, my hearing is just the same as yours. There's no secret. Really! Watch this. He reached into his pocket and pulled out some loose change and threw it on the sidewalk. And amid the all the noise of the city, every head within twenty feet turned to see where the sound of money was coming from.

"See," he said, "It's all a matter of what you're listening for."

See it's all a matter of what you're listening for. If we listen for the invitation to truly wish peace for others and to forgive others as we wish to be forgiven we will discover what Thomas came to know—that he was truly forgiven, loveable—and that peace was breathed into him. All he had to do was listen.

Jesus did not return to settle old scores, to castigate even his most loyal followers who deserted him and ran away in shame while his death was suffered alone. The post-Easter message was the message spoken and lived by Jesus in so many ways---it was the message he wanted his followers to listen for—it's the one we listen for and hear again and again-----All is forgiven---forgive yourself and others---Peace be to you! Peace be to you! Peace be to you!

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