

Second Sunday of Easter

By: Fr. Bob

One day the woodcutter took his grandson into the forest for his first experience in selecting and cutting oak trees which they would later sell to the boat builders. As they walked, the woodcutter explained that the purpose of each tree is contained in its natural shape: some are straight for planks, some have the proper curves for the ribs, and some are tall for masts. The woodcutter told his grandson that by experience recognizing these characteristics, someday he too might become the woodcutter of the forest.

A little way into the forest the grandson saw an old oak tree that had never been cut. The boy asked his grandfather if he could cut it down because it was useless for boat building—there were no straight limbs, the trunk was short and gnarled, and the curves were going the wrong way. “We could cut it down for firewood,” the grandson said; “at least then it will be of some use to us.”

The woodcutter replied that for now they should be about their work cutting the proper trees for the boat builders; maybe later they could return to the old oak tree.

After a few hours of cutting the huge trees the grandson grew tired and asked if they could stop for a rest in some cool shade. The woodcutter took his grandson over to the old oak tree, where they rested against its trunk in the cool shade beneath its twisted limbs. After they had rested a while, the woodcutter explained to his grandson the necessity of attentive awareness and recognition of everything in the forest and in the world. Some things are readily apparent, like the tall, straight trees; other things are less apparent, requiring closer attention, like recognition of the proper curves in the limbs. And some things might initially appear to have no purpose at all, like the gnarled old oak tree. The woodcutter stated, “You must learn to pay careful attention every day so that you can recognize and discover the purpose God has for everything in creation. For it is this old oak tree, which you so quickly deemed useless except for firewood, that now allows us to rest against its trunk amidst the coolness of its shade. “Remember, grandson, not everything is as it first appears. Be patient, pay attention, recognize, and discover.”

We continue to celebrate Easter. For indeed Easter is not only an even—the moment in time when the disciples ran and found the stone rolled away. Easter is a posture—a way of looking at things through eyes of faith. Easter calls us to a whole posture of awareness—awareness of a God who enlightens us, invites us and gives life to us. Easter is a call to trust in a God who overturns things and renews things. Easter is a call to trust in the promise—trust in the God who loves.

There was the story read this week of Peter and the others encountering a lame man—and because they believed that the

risen one was working through them they heal the man and the scripture tells that e starting walking and leaping and praising God. And then there was the story of Peter and John arrested because they kept preaching Jesus raised from the dead. But they couldn't keep quiet. They kept talking and praising the goodness and the power of God. They ultimately trusted that God was working with them and through them—they were aware of what had happened to them. And they seem to laugh at those who were surprised tat they could cute and they tell them that the way and the reason they could do this was because f the power of God in them. That's where they power came from and that's where their joy was found.

And in the stories of Jesus this week we see the friends of Jesus depressed and alone and gradually they open their eyes to encounter him—on the road to Emmaus where they find him in the breaking of the bread or on the beach with a charcoal fire or in the garden. Gradually they become aware of what he had said and done and trust in his words and promise—and then with eyes open they see him.

And so this Easter event that we are in the middle of is a call to trust—to believe in the promise. And the promise is expansive. We are not only called to believe that Jesus rose and couldn't be contained by the bonds of death and tomb, we are promised that we too can live newly—we too can experience resurrection—not just in the after life but in the day to day living of our lives. And we are promised that all those about us can also experience this paradise.

We look at the community of disciples in the readings this Easter time and we see that their lives are transformed. The fishermen of yesterday became people who bring new life to others. In our first reading today we are told that people wanted the shadow of the disciples to fall upon them—the fact that they were in the midst transformed them—made them not only well and walking and physically whole—they were given new hope and new possibility because of the Christ that these disciples brought them.

And who is Thomas in all of this? What is his stance—and what is his lesson for you and I in this Easter time? Perhaps he above all reminds us of ourselves. Thomas was having difficulty with the new posture perhaps—he was trying to get rid of the old way of looking at things. Thomas didn't trust as much as he should have—he didn't quite believe in the promise and invitation of the Lord.

We could pray in this Easter time to let the shadow of the disciples fall upon us so that our lameness and deafness and blindness might cease.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 5:12-16

Revelations 1:9-19

John 20:19-31

April 7, 2013

靈 修 生 活

信 仰

張 春 申 神 父

今天福音記載了耶穌的兩次顯現，敘述多默宗徒自無信到相信的變化；最後耶穌所說的兩句話，為我們的：「因為你看見了我，纔相信嗎？那些沒有看見而相信的，纔是有福的」。

首先根據這句話，不論看見，或者沒有看見，對於基督的復活都須籍着相信而接受。這究竟為什麼呢？原來基督復活是天主的新創造與新救援；是天主創造與救援的能力使死亡的耶穌，自死人的領域，進入天主自己永恆生命的境界內。這樣的自人間進入永恆的工程，不是人所看得見、聽得到、捉摸得住的；這是天主的行動，除非天主自己啓示，自己通傳，人是無能肯定的。即使宗徒，對於基督的復活，也是由於天主的啓示、通傳，他們才相信的。

那麼宗徒什麼時候纔相信呢？按照福音的記載，該是在耶穌顯現的時候。耶穌生前似乎談論到自己的復活，不過耶穌死後，宗徒並沒有立刻回憶祂的話而相信，只有當天主透過基督的顯現，啓示他們時，他們才纔真正相信：「看見了我，纔相信」。值得我們注意的，看見和相信不是同一件事。耶穌顯現，宗徒有了看見的經驗，不過四部福音都表示，他們尚猶豫不決，真正導致他們相信的，實在是天主籍着在他們心中的啓示與光照。總之，必須天主直接啓示，肯定基督真的復活了；宗徒纔真實地相信，不過他們相信，也得益於顯現的外在支持。但是假使沒有天主籍着復活基督在心中的啓示與光照，他們無能堅決地相信。

耶穌說：「因為你看見了我，纔相信嗎？那些沒有看見而相信的，纔是有福的。」可見不只是宗徒相信耶穌，我們所有的基督信徒如同他們一樣相信耶穌復活，那麼我們怎樣相信的呢？我們必需再三聲明，耶穌復活是天主的工程，除非天主自己啓示、通傳，人是無能肯定的。為我們信者而論，天主籍着教會的宣講，或者更好說，籍着臨在於教會宣講中的復活的基督，啓示與光照我們的內心，我們纔相信耶穌復活的。的確，教會的宣講是不可少的，不過由於耶穌復活是天主自己的工程，必需透過教會的宣講，領受天主籍着基督的啓示，我們纔堅決地相信。為此，我們和宗徒一樣相信，一樣由天主籍着復活基督的光照而相信；所不同的，是宗徒有基督的顯現的經驗；在這經驗中天主啓示；我們沒有看見，只是聆聽教會的宣講，在這宣講中天主的啓示。

講解到這裡，我們實在需要更進一層，說明一下相信，或者信仰。的確，相信是人的行為，是人自由地，無條件地，堅決地相信耶穌復活。但是根據我們已有的解釋，首先應當承認：根源上，信仰是天主的恩寵，是天主籍着復活基督所賜的恩寵。由於天主啓示與光照了信者，他們才纔相信的。所以信仰是來自天主的恩惠，基督復活因而在信者生命中產生新的遠景，從此他們對於宇宙與歷史有了基督宗徒的了解；在復活的基督內，他們相信天主創造與救援的工程已臻完成；他們的生命也有了新的方向與歸宿。

耶穌復活是基督宗教的信仰中心，也是其他一切信仰的基礎，因為根據這個中心信仰，教會對於天主，對於人類，對於宇宙萬物，有了自己特殊的認識。可是這個中心信仰的產生，在我們今天的說明中，正是基督復活給予信者的恩寵。天主籍着祂，啓示與光照了信者，賞賜他們由於耶穌復活而對於宇宙與歷史，產生了新的信仰，「舊的已成過去，看，都成了新的」。

摘自「妙音送長風」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 四 月 七 日

宗 5:12-16； 默 1:9-19； 若 20:19-31