

Homily — April 10, 2021

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We come to our last day of the Easter octave, though the Easter Season will continue for several weeks to come. This season is about witnessing Jesus alive and having the courage to proclaim Jesus alive as we see him, to a world which is skeptical and cynical—challenged by the culture of death and violence. Since we, too, have been skeptical or scared at times to give witness, we renew our baptismal commitment to proclaim the Gospel as we sing the hymn of the angels.

Mark, in his own descriptive, crisp and unabashed way, tells us that Easter belief wasn't easy, not even for Jesus' closest disciples. Mary told them she has seen Jesus alive—"But they did not believe her." The two travelers to Emmaus tell the other disciples "who do not believe them either." That prompted Jesus to reproach them "for their incredulity and obstinacy" for not believing those first witnesses of him alive.

Immediately after scolding them, Jesus said, "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation/creatures." The ones who believe and are baptized will be saved.

It isn't long thereafter that two of those scolded ones, John and Peter, face the chief religious leaders proclaiming with "astonishing assurance"... "Then I am glad to tell you all," Peter said, "that it was by the name of Jesus the Nazarene...that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy. For of all the names given to people, this is the only one by which we can be saved" (Acts 4:10 & 12). Peter displays clearly what we heard the Psalmist say earlier, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I am struck by the contradictive dynamics we have just heard about. They might reflect our own inconsistency personally and as a church, even to a point of being scandalous at times. The Risen Jesus understood inconsistent followers, reprimanded them and sent them on their mission. Jesus mirrors God's incredible compassion and mercy. His stance won the day. Jesus mercy encouraged John, Peter and many disciples to "declare the works of the Lord."

This mixed and messy scene spurs me on to believe that the same risen Christ is both reprimanding you and me for hesitation in our belief while at the same time sending us out to proclaim the Good News. That also requires you and me to be keenly aware of any and all concrete Good News we have witnessed. What works of the Lord have you and I seen in our personal life or in the lives and situations of others, which we must tell others—whether they will believe it or not.

In the spirit of the Responsorial Psalmist, we can say, **“I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.”**