

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
26 April 2009

Installation / Dedication of the new windows at St. Jude

St. John tells us today, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading: “Those who say, ‘I know Him,’ but do not keep His commandments are liars and the truth is not in them. But whoever keeps His word, the love of God is truly perfected in Him.”

Those who “know” Jesus... How important this is to our lives of faith – to truly come to KNOW Jesus – to recognize what the Paschal Mystery (His suffering, death and resurrection) really means in our lives – and what affect it has on our lives.

Jesus, in the Gospel, appears to the disciples yet again! This gospel is a continuation of the story of the “Road to Emmaus,” when 2 of Jesus’ disciples are leaving Jerusalem on that first Easter day – downcast – having lost hope that the One in whom they had placed all their hope, was dead. Jesus appears to them (though they don’t know who He is) and talks to them – opening for them the Scriptures and explaining to them all that referred to Him in the Scriptures. Then, staying with them for an evening meal – He takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them – at which point their eyes are opened and He vanishes from their sight. It was in the breaking of Bread that these disciples came to truly KNOW who Jesus was.

Having now returned to Jerusalem, these two disciples tell the apostles what they have experienced – and how they came to know Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread. While they are still explaining what happened, Jesus appears to them again – “touch me – see that I’m not a ghost.” Then he asks them for something to eat - Ghosts don’t eat! He’s REAL! Jesus, in all the resurrection accounts which we have been hearing in Easter – is showing His disciples who He is – He is teaching them to KNOW Him – through visible things.

That is probably the origin of art in churches. Art helps to teach people fundamental truths about the Faith. Thinking back many, many centuries – most people were illiterate, unable to read the Scriptures for themselves – so their teaching, their understanding of who Jesus is, was dependant upon the homilies they heard at Mass. But, to further help – artists were commissioned to paint, to sculpt, to help TEACH the truths of the faith through artwork. And so, the beautiful mosaics and paintings and sculptures and windows of our churches were created.

This weekend, our new stained glass windows were installed – obviously. I’m sure that the moment you came into the church – you couldn’t help but notice them. They are truly beautiful – but, as St. John reminds us that we need to KNOW Jesus – the windows are not just to “block out that bright sunlight”! They are art put at the service of theology. In designing these windows, I had several things in mind – so let me use

this weekend – and the installation of our new windows – to explain what these windows are teaching us.

On Good Friday, we heard this in the proclamation of the Passion: “When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

Now, here, in the front, above the altar and behind the cross, this scene, this moment from Jesus’ crucifixion, is placed before us for our constant meditation – and as a constant reminder. The image in the windows is exactly what we heard on Good Friday – Mary & John at the foot of the cross.

Jesus and Mary could not have been closer – and yet there was a strange distancing – seen even here in these words from the cross, “Woman, behold your son.” At Cana the wine ran out and she told him, “They have no wine.” Jesus responded, “Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” And Mary simply told the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.” These are the last recorded words of Mary in the Scriptures: “Do whatever He tells you.”

Mary, “at the cross, her station keeping.” There was nothing else she could do – except be there. The presence of our helplessness is our gift to the helpless – our presence is as important as our action.

Mary, what grief you felt – what horror at this occurrence. Who, contemplating this scene, would not weep and grieve with you? It is a scene beyond our imagining... She sees her son, bruised, beaten, dying – all for our salvation – that we might have life. We can only imagine the depth of love she felt for her Son as he hangs, dying. May I feel that same depth of love for Christ. Pray for me, Mary, that I, too, may feel that deep love for Jesus, your Son – that I could stand with you and beside you to mourn, to weep, to cry... to LOVE. Jesus, Christ, receive me when I, too, die. May Mary’s devotion – may her discipleship help me to be a better disciple – loving to the end – suffering it all in union with you.

Think for a moment – without Mary, Christ would have no body to offer on the cross. Mary is the one who brings forth God from her womb – who enables God to “take flesh and live among us.” Mary truly is at the heart of the mystery of our salvation. It was Christ’s death on the cross that brought us the offer of salvation, but without Mary’s *fiat* (let it be done to me as you have said) to the angel, there would be no death on the cross.

This image of Mary and John (the beloved disciple) at the cross – which now illumines the windows above the sanctuary and behind the cross – becomes an image of the

pilgrim Church. Mary is the model of discipleship in her total availability to the will of God. She had no agenda of her own. To the angel's announcement, she says "Let it be done according to your word." She has given herself totally over to God – and yet she is dependant upon others here on earth – upon Joseph her husband – and now upon John – to whom Jesus entrusts her. At Jesus' conception, she was alone – but God told Joseph "have no fear of taking Mary, your wife, into your home." Now, at the cross, Mary is alone again – and again God intervenes and provides her with comfort: "Behold, your mother.' And from that hour he took her into his home." In Mary's discipleship – in her being totally available to God – she is also totally dependant upon God's providing for her needs.

This is how Mary and John teach us to be true disciples of Christ: true availability to God overcomes any fear of being dependent on others, because God always provides. Our determination to be independent by being in control (an idea so prevalent in our culture and world today) is what makes us totally unavailable to God. Availability is letting God have His way, even when it brings us to the cross. For those who are available to God, our very lives are at His disposal – and so, Mary, "at the cross her station keeping" is totally available to God even "to the last."

Weeping at the cross, Mary is both the Mother of Sorrows (a heart which loves so much, broken in anguish) and the Mother of Hope (because in her availability, she knows God will take care of her – and us!). This is the key to true Christian discipleship. Here at the cross, in Mary and in John, we come to know that we are capable of total surrender – of love so deep that it surrenders itself into God's hands.

It is the cross that binds John to Mary, and binds all of us as Christians to one another in a mutual gift of self. Christ is THE gift, and Christ enables us to give the gift of ourselves – which is ultimately the gift of Christ in the Eucharist – which is why we have in the central window a symbol of the Eucharist – the GREATEST gift Christ gives us – Himself.

There are several unique things about this image of the Eucharist in our center window. The first is that it is DIRECTLY behind the cross – when you are standing right in the center of the church – you can't see it at all! Let me assure you, that is purposeful. What we see with our eyes in the Eucharist *appears* to be just bread and wine – but in reality it is Christ's Body and Blood – it is the un-bloody re-presentation of the moment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross – made real and present to us here and now. The symbol of the Eucharist is "hidden" because "hidden" in the Eucharist is the crucifixion of Christ.

If you look VERY closely in the central Eucharist window – you'll notice that there are actually words on it – a prayer – the Anima Christi. Let me read this prayer for you:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within Thy wounds hide me.  
Let me not be separated from Thee.  
From the evil enemy, defend me.  
In the hour of my death, call me.  
And bid me come to Thee.  
That with Thy saints I may praising you be.  
Forever and ever. Amen

*An indulgence of 300 days. An indulgence of 7 years, if recited after Holy Communion.  
- St. Ignatius Loyola*

It is an absolutely beautiful prayer speaking to us about the Eucharist (Body of Christ – save me), about Baptism (water from the side of Christ, wash me) and the crucifixion (in your wounds, hide me). But it also teaches us how to live our Christian lives:

Good Jesus, hear me – the importance of prayer – Jesus as our advocate (as St. John said in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today, “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ...” How important for us to rely on Christ Jesus for all our needs.

From the evil enemy, defend me – who else is our greatest defense against the evil one but Jesus? WHAT else is our greatest defense, but our reception of Jesus in Holy Communion.

At the hour of my death, call me and bid me come to thee, that with thy saints I may praising you be, for ever and ever – the Goal of our Christian lives – to live in this world in such a way that we enjoy God’s presence for ever in heaven!

I pray that, as these windows are dedicated to the glory and honor of God this weekend – that they will be lasting reminds for all of us – ways of constantly teaching us to Know Jesus so that, as John said in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, knowing Him, we may “keep His word” so that “the love of God [will be] truly perfected in [each of us].”