

3rd Sunday of Easter
April 17-18, 2021

“Why are you troubled?”

Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; 1 John 2:1-5; Luke 24: 35-48

“Why are you troubled?” Such was the question posed to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Could we not ask the exact same question today? If you have driven in downtown Minneapolis lately, you have seen the barricades– they are impossible to miss. The Twin Cities is in the news again, tragically, for all the wrong reasons. As a society, we are troubled.

Following a fatal police-involved shooting of Daunte Wright, the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center thrust the Twin Cities into the national limelight again. Coupled with an already tense situation around the Hennepin County courthouse due to the high-profile trial of Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis Police officer, and you have all the kindling one needs to ignite a massive forest fire.

As we bask in the joy of the Easter season and gaze upon a sanctuary filled with flowers, just beneath the surface we face an uncertain future that has people ill at ease. Last Thursday, as we were preparing for Eucharistic Adoration amidst the Catholics at the Capitol event, the severe weather sirens sounded. As this was not 1:00 pm on the first Wednesday of the month, and the weather seemed fine outside, I was quite puzzled. It had slipped past me that it was Tornado Awareness Week– my mistake to be sure. But my first thought was, “What is happening now?”

This has been a traumatic week and next week promises the same. The Minnesota National Guard– weekend citizen-soldiers who work in regular jobs like everyone else– has been mobilized. Most often they are called up for natural disasters and other emergency situations, but this time in order to keep the peace. With some regularity, I hear helicopters circling overhead and local business once again are being boarded up proactively.

It is in times just such as these that our fundamental conviction about the resurrection of Jesus Christ is put to the test. Some question whether the

Risen Christ even makes a real and tangible difference in our society. We have a sacred duty to answer this question with a resounding “Yes.”

If Easter Sunday is fundamentally about the resurrection of Jesus– and it is of course– then the Easter season is about how you and I incorporate that message into our daily lives. Only during the Easter season is the first reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles, and not from the Old Testament, as throughout the rest of the liturgical year. And that reason is to chronicle how the apostles put the Easter message into practice. In other words, they were left to spread the Gospel message and so are we.

We begin with the foundational conviction that “He is Risen.” While theologians speculate precisely how the resurrected and glorified body of Jesus ought to be characterized, the historicity of the bodily resurrection cannot be questioned. Our faith teaches that “the Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ.”¹ How we conduct our Christian lives flow directly from the conviction that this truth matters.

It is true that an empty tomb itself does not prove anything; even the Scriptures acknowledge that there could be other explanations for the disappearance of Jesus’ body. Faith sees more deeply into the reality of the empty tomb. All other explanations fall short. Our Catechism notes:

Given all these testimonies, Christ’s Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples’ faith was drastically put to the test by their master’s Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold.”²

Make no mistake–our faith is being put to the test in our own times, even drastically so. These are divisive times, obviously tense times. Archbishop Hebda has invited all parishes to pray in a particular way on Monday, using the Mass prayers for the Preservation of Peace and Justice.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church para. #638

² Ibid., para. #643

Here at the Cathedral, the Archbishop will offer the 7:30 a.m. daily Mass on Monday, during which we he invites us to:

...ask our Lord to help us recognize the shared humanity of all of our sisters and brothers. We plead with the Prince of Peace to penetrate our hearts. It is only by seeing Christ in each other that we will honor the dignity of each person and arrive at true peace and justice in our world, in our country, in our communities and in our families.³

I invite you to make a special effort to join us here for this Mass. Our Easter faith can come to our aid. May the Lord shower his blessings of peace upon our cities and families. May all citizens strive to exhibit charity, to respect the rule of law, and to afford each another, even in our differences, the presumption of good will. This is how civil societies work.

“Why are you troubled?” This is the question raised in today’s Gospel. It doubles as the perfect question for our consideration here and now. If we seek solutions, then we have plenty of work ahead.

Though we may not read from the Old Testament during the Easter season, it is appropriate to provide a closing quotation from the prophet Jeremiah, who relayed the sage advice of the Lord so eloquently: “Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you; pray for it to the LORD, for upon its welfare your own depends.”⁴

³ Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Parish Leadership Update (e-mail), Friday April 16

⁴ Cf. Jeremiah 29:7