



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Homily for the Third Sunday After Easter, 2005

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"Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Jesus proves to the two disciples that he is risen from the dead by exploring the Old Testament Scriptures. It is these Scriptures that explain his dying and rising. Without them Calvary would have no meaning. We cannot do without the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures explain why Christ was necessary. They show that God created the world good; man introduced sin and following on sin, death. In rejecting God's friendship man had rejected the source of his own life. Throughout their history, in spite of the prophets and the Lord's deeds on their behalf, the people of Israel proved incapable of responding to their creator with love and obedience.

Then the wonder-working Jesus comes on the scene, offering eternal life to those who accept him, but his offer is rejected and he is killed. What can his rising from the dead mean but that a flesh-and-blood human being has now repaired the damage done to human nature by sin by giving the Father the love and obedience he had sought from the beginning? The death and resurrection of Jesus make no sense without the revelation of how sin and death entered the world. That is why Jesus_ and Saint Peter on Pentecost morning_ turn to the Old Testament to explain Easter. For Saint Peter, Jesus was the one about whom the psalm said, "You will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor let your beloved know decay. You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence." Peter and Jesus himself send us back to the Old Testament to understand the meaning of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. Jesus gives us the lens through which the Old Testament reveals its profoundest meaning.

Now we know that the secret plan of God from the very beginning was to send his Son in the flesh to adhere to the Father's will even to death, thus redeeming the fallen human race. We need to reread the Old Testament in the light of Jesus, because the God who dealt so intimately with his people from Abraham on is the God of Jesus Christ. Now we know what the psalms and the prophets and the Law are all about. They are ultimately about Jesus. They must be read in connection with him who is the fullness of God's secret plan. When the psalm says, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord," this is Jesus crying to the Father in his agony. When it says, "I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me, and have not let my enemies rejoice over me," this is Jesus praising his Father for his victory over death on behalf of all of us, who constitute his Body.

Everything in the Bible speaks of Jesus. Nothing makes sense without him. He is the one who reveals the depths of divine love and the one who wins our salvation



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by his obedience. He shows who God is and who man is. His dying and rising constitute the central event of human history because they create a new humanity freed from sin. Recall the familiar scene of Pope John Paul II holding against his forehead his staff of office with the depiction of the crucified Christ. It was simultaneously a gesture of profound prayer, of personal communion with Christ in his saving Passion, and a proclamation to the world of its only savior.

Something similar happens at each Mass. In imitation of Jesus at the Last Supper and at Emmaus the priest blesses the Father for his great deeds on behalf of mankind, in particular for the shedding of the blood of his Son which saved us from sin. He praises the Father for the Passover, our exodus from the slavery of sin, and in his very thanksgiving makes that saving act present again. The Holy Father left as a kind of last Testament the dedication of the current year to the Eucharist, about which he wrote: "At the dawn of this third millennium, we, the children of the Church, are called to undertake with renewed enthusiasm the journey of Christian living. The program already exists: it has its center in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. The implementation of this program of a renewed impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist." Holy Father, intercede for your people who nourish themselves on the mystery of the Christ you loved. May our lives, like yours, proclaim to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord.