

2nd Sunday of Easter (A)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
April 22, 23, 2017

In the civil, secular world, not in our Church and liturgical world, last weekend may have been colored Peeps weekend. I hope you had at least one or two! I had 3 or 4, and was amazed at the new bright colors of Peeps. But this weekend is Oreo cookie weekend, at least here in our parishes. There will be Oreo cookies for each child as they leave today.) What do I mean by that simply that like an Oreo cookie, with the good stuff in between the two chocolate lids, I find the good stuff of today's Scriptures in the 2nd Reading, the one between the Old Testament Scripture and the Gospel reading, and just like the good stuff of an Oreo cookie, the second reading seems to be the one that holds the other two readings together. There is nothing wrong with either of the other two we need to hear what the early Christian community was like, so that we can model our own parish communities on them, and learning about the struggle of Thomas to believe is if nothing else consoling. For we also often struggle to make Easter Faith real in our lives. We cannot settle for thinking of Jesus only as a 'good man'. We need to believe in Jesus as resurrected Lord and Savior. I'm sure most of us know one or two evangelical Christians, we have no problem sharing with us that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. Indeed he is!

But now to the 2nd Scripture, the one from First Peter. What I find so good, like the filling in an Oreo cookie, is the following:

in God's great mercy (this is really Mercy Sunday) we have been given

.....

-a new birth to a living hope

-an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading

-salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time

And Peter closes this with the statement "*in this you rejoice*".

He is honest, however, in saying all of this, by giving us a 'caveat', a condition or warning: "*for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of our faith, may prove to be for praise, glory and honor (of God).*"

One of the great character defects in most of our lives is that we have short memories, and little perseverance. We don't have longevity in our commitments, or maybe in more spiritual terms, we don't have much 'long-suffering'. We tend to zip through even significant events of life with little or no reflection. Obvious examples of this are how we do with New Year's Resolutions, and how the week after Easter compares to the 40 days of Lent. Our New Year's Resolutions last for maybe 4-6 weeks, and when Lent is over, 'it is over'. The chocolate and all flavors of caffeine are back in our diet, and some feel free to swear again. (I did bump into someone this past Friday who ate no sweets, drank no pop, and there was one other thing they gave up during Lent. I asked them if

they had gone back to those things, and they said “No”. If small faith groups were part of our Lenten practice, they also seem to fall apart. There was a report shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that as a nation we filled the churches for about a 6 week period of time, and then off we went to life as usual when we all know that since 9/11 life has been anything but usual and normal. Some even coined the phrase 'new normal'. Another way I see evidence of our habit of zipping through things, is how the RCIA often happens: months are spent preparing for entrance into the Church, and then it is over and too often literally over. How can this be, especially for those who at the end of those months are baptized. In the waters of baptism, their lives are given an entirely new orientation, an entirely new direction. Through baptism, they are in Christ, with Christ, and are to live their lives and honor God through Christ. We need to live differently, and regularly worship the one who has given us Jesus, and brought us into Christ. (We can say the same for Scarlett Rae today. She is new and different, in Jesus, and she depends on all of us here to help her learn and live the ways of Jesus.)

Taking a look again at the First Scripture for today, we get a good picture of what the new normal after Easter (after baptism) should look like: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles

to the communal, common life,
breaking bread together and praying together as a community
they held all things in common, even selling their property and possessions,
dividing them among all according to each one's need.

It is one thing to get through Lent, and celebrate Easter. But we must also be concerned about what happens after Easter Lent is only 40 days, and Easter itself just one day, or 50 if you count the entire Season. But what if someone walks into our parish and especially one of our weekend Masses ... what will they find? A people full of life, a people that is and exudes joy? What we hear about today is how our lives should be and look like during the other 275 days of the year. We have every reason to be different we have every reason to live the 'new normal' because of Easter, because of the things that Peter proclaims in that 2nd Scripture for today:

-a new birth to a living hope – in a world in which refugees are running for their lives due to religious persecution, when churches are bombed on Palm Sunday, children are kidnapped and taken into sex trafficking, a State in our own country attempts to carry out 8 sentences of capital punishment before the needed cocktails run out at the end of April somebody needs to be signs of hope ... and there is no one better than those who know about Easter.

- and we have every reason to be those people, because we have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and we are the heirs of salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.

How you and I live these 50 days of Easter and the other 275 days until the next Easter will tell whether or not we even believe in Easter, and especially whether or not we are grateful that Jesus suffered, died and rose from the dead. May others see Easter in us!