

Good Friday 2020 Homily Outline

Today I'd like to preach on the response of humanity to this incredible sacrificial gift of the Cross as seen in the actions of St. Peter and his incredible three-fold denial of the Lord.

It is interesting to note that the Gospels are really clear on the following facts:

1. Peter is the hand-selected leader of the Apostles, chosen by Jesus as the “Rock” and as the bearer of the “keys to kingdom of heaven”.
2. That all of the Gospels recount for us that Peter denied Jesus.

So let's go through not only what happens but try to understand why.

1. Peter

- Name was changed from Simon to “the Rock”
- The one who is the bearer of the keys to the Kingdom of heaven
- The one who walked on water
- The one who witnessed the glorious Transfiguration
- The one Jesus chose to be the head of the Apostles, our first Pope

2. Peter's Boast

Matthew 26:33-35 (Mark follows similar lines)

PETER SAID TO HIM IN REPLY, “**THOUGH ALL MAY HAVE THEIR FAITH IN YOU SHAKEN, MINE WILL NEVER BE.**” JESUS SAID TO HIM, “AMEN, I SAY TO YOU, THIS VERY NIGHT BEFORE THE COCK CROWS, YOU WILL DENY ME THREE TIMES.” PETER SAID TO HIM, “EVEN THOUGH I SHOULD HAVE TO DIE WITH YOU, I WILL NOT DENY YOU.” AND ALL THE DISCIPLES SPOKE LIKEWISE.

In Luke's Gospel we even have Jesus' warning and prayer for Peter along with the prediction:

Luke 22:31-34

“SIMON, SIMON, BEHOLD SATAN HAS DEMANDED TO SIFT ALL OF YOU LIKE WHEAT, BUT I HAVE PRAYED THAT YOUR OWN FAITH MAY NOT FAIL; AND ONCE YOU HAVE TURNED BACK, YOU MUST STRENGTHEN YOUR BROTHERS.” HE SAID TO HIM, “LORD, I AM PREPARED TO GO TO PRISON AND TO DIE WITH YOU.” BUT HE REPLIED, “I TELL YOU, PETER, BEFORE THE COCK CROWS THIS DAY, YOU WILL DENY THREE TIMES THAT YOU KNOW ME.”

John's Gospel, echoes the generous impulse of Peter's heart:

John 13:37-38

PETER SAID TO HIM, “MASTER, WHY CAN'T I FOLLOW YOU NOW? I WILL LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR YOU.”

3. Peter's Fall

THEN THE MAID WHO WAS THE GATEKEEPER SAID TO PETER, “YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THIS MAN'S DISCIPLES, ARE YOU?”

HE SAID, "I AM NOT."

NOW THE SLAVES AND THE GUARDS WERE STANDING AROUND A CHARCOAL FIRE THAT THEY HAD MADE, BECAUSE IT WAS COLD, AND WERE WARMING THEMSELVES. PETER WAS ALSO STANDING THERE KEEPING WARM.

NOW SIMON PETER WAS STANDING THERE KEEPING WARM.

*He thinks, "well, I can't do anything to help **Him**" – but then he thinks – "it's cold, I'm cold. I might as well be warm and comfortable, no reason for me to be cold too. It won't do any good for me to cold."*

- Jesus is being accused, struck, and facing the hatred of the Sanhedrin – and Peter is blending in with the crowd.
- Jesus is cold – and Peter is warm and comfortable.
- Jesus is standing over there – and Peter is over here.

Ultimately, he's not *with* Jesus.

4. Penance

As Christians we talk often of the need for penance, for sacrifice, self-denial, mortification, dying to self. You might think sometimes, what's the point? This is exactly the point – because it's the way that we can be *with* Jesus.

- Jesus is the man of service, self-giving, and sacrifice, he was poor, hungry, thirsty – he spent long nights in prayer, and wandered far in search of lost sheep, he had nowhere to lay his head, at times he was hunted and despised.
- When we deny ourselves food or dessert, when we turn down the heat, when we are silent, when we turn away from easy entertainments and diversions – when we allow for discomfort, when we don't seek out comfort

Those are the little steps to being *with* Jesus.

Penance as a way to be in solidarity with the Suffering Christ and the Suffering world.

5. Peter's Repentance

St. Luke fills in the important conclusion to the scene of the denial:

Luke 22:60b-62

AND IMMEDIATELY, WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, THE COCK CROWED. AND THE LORD TURNED AND LOOKED AT PETER. AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD SAID TO HIM, "BEFORE THE COCK CROWS TODAY, YOU WILL DENY ME THREE TIMES." AND HE WENT OUT AND WEPT BITTERLY.

Peter repents of not being *with* the Lord.

Then three times Jesus will ask him, "Do you love me?" Because Our Lord knows that it is only Love which will keep Peter close.