The Resurrection of the Lord--The Mass of Easter Day

By Br. Steve Herro, O. Praem.

Liturgy planners have several choices for the Second Reading and the Gospel for today’s Mass. I was particularly grabbed by choices 1 Cor 5: 6b-8 and Luke 24:13-35. Both Paul and Luke encourage us to be hopeful and positive, as Jesus did indeed die, but that he has also risen; he lives again, lives anew, and he will always be with us.

What is the legacy of faith based social justice heroes? Pope Francis reminded our Congress, and the entire world via global broadcast, that our country and all of history has been positively impacted by Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. During today’s era of partisan division and trashing of personal reputations; unchecked US gun violence; near record forced migration due to environmental degradation and oppressive home governments; and drought and starvation exasperated by climate change, it is helpful for homilists to remind their assemblies this Easter day of the presence of the risen Christ and the legacy of social justice heroes and saints on whom we still lean.

Jesus is still with us; our Savior who showed a preferential option for those excluded by their communities, be they adultresses, demoniacs, Samaritans, and tax collectors and instructed his disciple to put away his sword when Jesus was arrested, should guide our actions today. Challenge the listener--if we are celebrating the presence of the resurrected Jesus in our lives for all time, we must follow his call to be in solidarity with the marginalized and avoid war and violence at all costs.

Leave the warm fuzzies of those who have gone before us behind; remember these saints and heroes as challenging spokespersons and witnesses for justice and peace. To circle back to Pope Francis’ famous foursome, remember that we don’t immortalize Abraham Lincoln because he walked five miles to return a borrowed book but because he prioritized national unity. We don’t just honor Dr. King because he encouraged us to perform community service but also because he sought to upend institutional racism. We are not seeking the canonization of Dorothy Day because she decided NOT to give up her second child but also because she modelled how to find Christ in the lives of those living in poverty. We seek the inspiration of Thomas Merton decades after his death not only because of his contemplative lifestyle, but because of his prophetic words about the immorality of war.

As we embrace that Jesus is with us always, how will we daily emulate the just and peaceful behavior that he preached and lived?

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