

## **APRIL 20-26 – Jesuit Mass Homilies**

### **Second week of Easter 2020**

**Monday, April 20**

**Father Hooks**

- Stories of my town and family growing up (Christ the King, West Shore Blvd)
- Never really satisfied or answered all my questions
- Who am I? Where are we from?
- Started reading Scripture and history of the Church
- Saw the origins of my faith, who I am with God, who WE are in relationship, what the Church is
- Deep sense of connection and satisfaction
- Easter season: readings from Acts, our history, especially of the Church we know: Peter, Paul, Barnabas, the Faith spreading throughout the known world
- Assignment: Use Acts as your spiritual reading this Easter season. Get to know our story.
- Best part: Acts is story of effects of Risen Christ on the Church and on us
- Before, disciples in room, locked away for fear
- Jesus enters in, resurrected, gives them joy, courage, hope, power
- They literally go OUT of that room to preach, teach, heal
- That is what Acts is about
- Prayer for you: Jesus enter into whatever room you're shut into out of fear and give you His joy, encouragement, hope, power to go out and share the good news of the great things He has done for you with others.

**A.M.D.G.**  
**Livestream Mass**  
**Sacred Heart Chapel**  
**April 21, 2020**  
**Father Hermes**

Yesterday, one of our employees told me, with a straight face, how happy she was to see her supervisor. Now, *that* caught my attention, but . . . she's an enthusiastic person, and he's a genuinely good supervisor and, after all, since we're working in skeleton crews on campus each day, it had been over a month since had had any personal, face-to-face interactions. In family life, everybody's had similar experiences. Phone calls, text messages, emails, maybe even Face Time, but often no really personal interaction, no physical presence, no actual gestures of intimacy and family love. All this has been true for the community of the Church, too. The regime of social distancing and stay-at-home protocols have altered life in the Church beyond recognition. Our life together, our communion, has been constricted during what we hope is just a relatively short-term response to a crisis.

Today's reading from Acts sheds some light on all this. It insists that the Church is a communion of faith, united in one mind and heart, but one that must be grounded in a *bodily, physical co-existence*, and one that's all the more spiritual because it includes the *bodily*. For we're told that the Church *consists in the mutual sharing of all things*.

The overall purpose of the Acts of the Apostles is to give us our basic understanding of the Church; in other words, to show us what dynamics must be present for the Church at all times, elements that no "new normal" can do without. From the earliest chapters of Acts, we learn that the Church is a *koinonia*, a communion united in prayer, centered on Mary and the Apostles, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go always to the ends of the earth, preaching the Gospel in trial and tribulation, reversing the Tower of Babel with the common language of faith. This communion that is the Church is a communion of Christ, *bodily Risen*, who sends the Holy Spirit to the new family of God, a family that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

But it's now become necessary for us to insist that the communion of the Church depends on presence with another, sharing our fellowship in the Lord sacramentally – and being physically and personally present to one another at the altar of the Lord. Pope Francis recently said that although the Lord may permit all this as a temporary remedy in a difficult situation, nonetheless, the ideal of the Church is “always with the sacraments and with the people – always.” It might just dawn on us that mere spiritual connectivity, or a merely spiritualized, and certainly a merely virtual church, is not the church of Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became *flesh*. The whole logic of the Incarnation and the bodily Resurrection of the Lord, the logic of salvation by means of the sacraments, those visible signs that actually impart the grace they signify, is this – **communion in faith with one another**, communion that is both physical and personal, a spiritual communion that is therefore fully human. In fact, our humanity and all our human associations depend on bodily proximity and intimacy; no surprise then, so does our earthly participation in the communion of saints.

The act of spiritual communion that so many have now learned to practice is not an end in itself. It's supposed to be directed always towards sacramental communion. To pray to be united with the Lord in the sacrament is to ask the Lord to stir up our longing for the gift of His presence in our lives. His gift of Himself in the abiding sacrament, the Eucharist, is the condition for his abiding with us until the Second Coming. So especially if you're participating *by yourself* in these televised Masses, beg God with persistence to hasten the day when the fellowship of the Church can again be a bodily fellowship for the whole Church, a community truly sharing all things, centered on the Body and Blood of the Risen Lord, the Body and Blood that feeds his people, that makes us a communion of one mind and heart, and that communicates to us life eternal. Amen.

***Jesuit feast day: Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Society of Jesus***

***22 April 2020***

***Father Deutsch***

Today the Jesuits commemorate this date in 1541, when St. Ignatius and his companions pronounced their vows as Jesuits, and on this date that they dedicated the Society of Jesus to the protection of the Blessed Mother.

From the Catholic Catechism:

*By the grace of God, Mary was kept free from every personal sin her whole lifelong. She is the one who is “full of grace.” When the angel announced to her that she would give birth to “the Son of the Most High,” she freely gave her consent with the obedience of faith. Mary thus gave herself entirely to the person and work of her Son Jesus, espousing wholeheartedly the divine will regarding salvation.*

For me as a Jesuit, there are two key components in this statement from the Catechism: heart-deep devotion and mission as a servant of God.

Mary was preserved from personal sin all her life. This does not indicate that she had enough spiritual grace to be self-sufficient and independently able to live her life without sin. Rather, it indicates the mystery that with divine grace Mary's whole life faced toward God. Her heart and spirit yearned to give herself wholeheartedly to the Father. In this grace of self-gift, she cooperated in the conception of her son Jesus; and in Jesus she dedicated her life, culminating at the foot of the Cross at his crucifixion.

Mary's graced love of God and her participation in the mission of her Son provide guidance and example to Jesuits who pray for the grace to be placed at the foot of Jesus's Cross and to give their whole life to the mission of Jesus.

Jesus came to gather all creation as a gift to be laid at the feet of the Father so that all creation may be one in the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We call to the Blessed Mother to be tender to us under the mantle of her cape of loving protection, giving us nurture and encouragement so we turn our hearts to her Son, rather than turning away in disgrace. In Mary, who

mothers all who come to Jesus, we find expression of our desire to be one with the mission of God in our world.

As at the special moment at the wedding feast at Cana, when a couple humanly messed up and were not able to provide for their guests as social custom required, Mary stepped in to petition Jesus to cover their human frailty. We now ask the Blessed Mother to beg her Son to cover our human frailty at this time when the paths in front of us seem to be uncertain.

With today's feast we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary in her protection of the Society of Jesus, teaching us how to give to God from the yearning and uncertainty of our hearts and to place our skills and intellect at the direction of Jesus as He gathers all creation to lay at the feet of His Father.

Devotion & Mission.

**AMDG**

**Thursday, April 23, 2020**

**Father Hooks**

The apostles are kicking up a stink. They won't stop speaking of Jesus. They won't stop holding the Temple leaders accountable for putting Him to death. They won't stop healing the sick or the lame. They won't stop inviting other people to join their community of believers, a community that is marked by forgiveness, joy, charity to the poor outside the community, and making sure that everyone's needs inside the community are seen to. This is not the way the Temple leaders are used to doing things. They're not used to accusations, or to being outshined. They're certainly not used to the idea that Jesus' mission is being brought forward after His Ascension. Their peace is being disturbed. But without a doubt, this is the work of God. By their fruits you shall know them. Their tree has been barren, while these Christians flourish.

We put a high premium on peace. iPhone clickbait featuring individuals with placid smiles and closed eyes invite us to virtual mindfulness sessions. We spend time and resources on counselors and spiritual directors and retreats and prayer, hungry for one or another version of peace or settledness, or reassurance that we're doing everything right. That we're okay.

I'm not saying that counseling or yoga is bad. I'm certainly not encouraging that we spend less time in prayer. But the Scriptures remind us today that God is not always out to give us short-term inner peace. God, as the old spiritual goes, is gonna trouble the water and invite us to wade straight in. Sometimes Jesus is out to stir things up in us, to upend our comfortable inner order. It can sting our pride to reconsider an old habit or old decision. It actually hurts to let go of hurts. Surgery is intrusive in the short run. But in the long run, God willing, it leads to healing.

The Temple authorities found themselves troubled in the moment, and never realized that this was for their ultimate good. Let us not be too suspect too quickly when our own waters are troubled. Jesus is not interested in our short-term settledness. He is interested in our long-term salvation. He is out to first intrude, then to heal. He is out to first upend, then reorder. He is out to make you and me and all things new.

Sometimes God quietly enters in - a still, small whispering sound. Sometimes He throws the door open, uninvited, laden with bags, and without a timetable for departure. The good news is that He doesn't mind a mess. When we suddenly find our lives disturbed, let us not be too quick to throw the visitor out. Let us consider whether this short-term disturbance may just be for our long-term salvation. It may be the best guest we've ever not welcomed.

**Friday of the Second Week of Easter**  
**April 24, 2020**  
**Father Rivera-Fals**

In the light of Easter we re-read the events that have marked the preaching of Jesus. Today we are invited to meditate on perhaps the most famous miracle performed by Jesus: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, a miracle told six times by the evangelists. But, in St. John's version, the miracle is for Jesus the opportunity to make a long and articulated reflection on God's desire. It is as if the liturgy tells us that the Risen Lord is the one who sees our hunger and thirst for justice and happiness and fulfills it.

St. John reports two details that the other evangelists do not point out. It is Philip who realizes the hunger of the crowd and makes a quick calculation on the cost of their possible intervention: to feed everyone, the equivalent of two hundred days' wages worth of food is not enough! An impossible task. But, St. John notes, the initiative to do something about it comes from a teenager, a boy willing to share his snack. God loves teenagers' spontaneity and generosity. With what seems so ridiculously little, God can do great things. Let's learn from this teenage boy to dream and get involved!

**A.M.D.G.**  
**Livestream Mass**  
**Sacred Heart Chapel**  
**Feast of Saint Mark**  
**April 25, 2020**  
**Father Hermes**

Today we celebrate the feast of the Evangelist, Saint Mark. Saint Mark was the first patriarch of Alexandria (Egypt) and he is the patron of Venice. St. Mark was not one of the Apostles, but he and his Gospel were associated early on with the ministry of Saint Peter. In fact, Mark's Gospel is the first to give us the title "Good News" (evangelium), or Gospel, as the name of a summary of the life of Jesus. At the very beginning of his Gospel, Mark identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. And, in fact, the central theme of the Gospel is the revelation of Jesus's identity as the Crucified Messiah.

The association of this Gospel with Saint Peter makes the ending, which we heard as today's Gospel, so perfectly appropriate. It is an ecclesial ending in every sense – the Crucified Christ, now Risen, missions the Eleven, the Apostolic college, telling them, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." Apostolic preaching is universal and it is connected with baptism and salvation. The Gospel concludes with the affirmation of faith, that the Risen Christ empowers the Church from the seat of God's power, from His "right hand," the place to which the Lord ascended.

The enduring witness of Saint Mark and his Gospel is the witness of the Church in every age – Jesus, the Crucified Messiah, sent by God to deliver us from our sins, is bodily risen and has ascended to the right hand of God. He sends his followers into the world and gives them his power, not a worldly power, but the power that defeats the malevolent powers of this world, a heavenly power, a godly power that liberates us from condemnation, a power that heals and saves.

It's a forceful reminder for us in this era of intensifying secularization that the Gospel and faith in the Risen Christ is not simply one religion among others. It's not simply our spiritual balm, handed down from our ancestors, to get us through the difficulties of this life. No, the Gospel has ultimate meaning for us and for all peoples, for all creation. Our faith is meant to be evangelical and missionary, a compelling witness to those who do not yet know Christ. Through the intercession of Saint Mark, the Evangelist, may we in our time be worthy of this great calling. Amen.

**Third Sunday of Easter**  
**26 April 2020**  
**Father Deutsch**

At the age of 23, I entered the Jesuits after finishing my undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering at Texas A&M. My heart was full with Jesus and I was eager to do great things for God.

For the first 12 years as a Jesuit, my journey of discipleship made sense. I was finding success in the tasks assigned to me. I felt like I was making progress up the ladder of leadership; I was getting recognition. My prayer continued to be a source of amazing experiences. The paths ahead all seemed wide-open.

And then the rupture came. For the next six years I was adrift. No longer did my Jesuit life make sense to me. The landmarks in my spiritual life gave no guidance. All sense of progress stopped. During this time of being blocked, it was clear to me that my presumption that God rewarded hard

work was no longer true; my hard work, dedication, and sacrifice no longer produced the answers that I demanded.

Then, unexpectedly, after years of being adrift, Jesus found me, and my prayer again had traction and gave me cool refreshment. For the past 20 years, I have been experiencing the tenderness of Jesus's concern for me. My new landmarks, however, are rooted in God's gracious gift, not in my accomplishments. Prayer is a time for me to give thanks, rather than informing God of what needs to happen. The order is reversed from my early years in the Jesuits.

In our current moment of the coronavirus, in which we have virtual classes, Zoom meetings, and teleconference doctor appointments, let me give clear testimony that our prayer relationship with Jesus is not virtual. God has the ability to reach directly into our hearts. Even when paths ahead of us are fogged in, God has the tender touch to reach inside of us.

I have heard it said that bad habits are hard to break, and thus that good habits are hard to break. Good prayer habits can make a pattern in our life in fruitful times, and in dry.

In these past two decades, I have three moments each day set aside to open the door for Jesus to come in. First, I share my cup of coffee in the early morning quiet. Second, before lunch I examine how my day has gone and anticipate challenges in the hours yet ahead. Third, at night I journal special moments in the day in order to go to bed with a mood of giving thanks to God.

In addition to these scheduled moments that give my daily life structure, unscripted moments come while listening to music playlists and gazing upon prints of art. While elusive, these moments hook me deeply when they happen.

With our spiritual paths unsure in this time of sheltering in place, we can draw insight from today's Gospel passage as the two disciples journey to Emmaus and Jesus joins them on the way. With the loss of hope, it is natural for us to seek comfort by soothing ourselves. The spiritual caution for us is that soothing can deaden the burden of the moment, and deaden us to God's touch. We see in these two disciples that they are escaping, they are going the wrong direction. Symbolically, they are heading toward the

setting sun (not the rising sun). Same for us: deadening the sense of being fogged in can also deaden us to the sunrise of God's touch in our hearts.

The Gospel passage concludes with the two disciples experiencing their hearts burning with excitement and eagerness to share the news. This too can be our experience, even with uncertain times ahead, because God has the ability to reach inside of us.