

5th Sunday of Lent, Year C

March 20, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA 32607
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1st Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!

Psalm 126

The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

2nd Reading: Philippians 3:8-14

For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things...not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes from faith in Christ, the righteousness from God...

Gospel: John 8:1-11

“Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

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The other day, I was playing chess with my wise friend Allie the owl. We were talking about the next two weeks and Allie said, “Only love is believable.” It struck me that those four words sum up Christ, Christianity and the Christian: the passion of Christ, the impact of Christianity and the power of the individual Christian.

Only love is believable. In the first place, only love makes Jesus of Nazareth believable as the Messiah. He came armed only with the power of love. Only his love for us makes sense of the next two weeks. Why would he go through all that we call the “Passion,” betrayal by one of his best friends, abandonment by the other, all the rejection, all the insults, all the torture, the beatings, the humiliation, carrying a heavy cross through the marketplace of Jerusalem, the nails, the pain. None of it makes any sense except that in the most horrendous moment, he called out to God and said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” We might feel pity for an innocent man on the cross; but we feel much more, we are drawn into his love. On Calvary the words that resonate through history come alive: This is my body given up for you; this is my blood poured out for you.

Yes, only love is believable. If love alone makes Jesus believable as the Christ, then love alone makes Christianity believable. Today’s Gospel is a lesson

for Christianity. When we study Christianity, we are impressed most by the love that conquered hate. It is a thrilling fact that the Church of Christ is most attractive when when love is most evident. Mother Teresa said "love is a fruit always in season." Her love for the lowest classes of people is continuing wherever her Sisters work. When our own missionaries from Queen of Peace go to Haiti they carry our love. We are living the words of the Constitution of the Church from Vatican II: *The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those that are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.*"

Love is believable only if my love is believable. Only if I am honest enough to admit that my love is less believable than it ought to be. Only if I accept the fact that it is not the person next to me, it is not the politicians, it is not the bishop, or the institutional Church that is hypocritical or lacking in love. It is me. I am as anxious and haughty as the judgmental crowd dropping their stones. Sin is sin, there's not one of us who dares throw the first stone. It is not simply that the woman is not condemned; it is that we are all sinners and Jesus condemns none of us. Here lies the unparalleled importance of these two weeks of the Passion. Tonight we will enjoy the Passion play put on by our own people. Tuesday we will have our opportunity for confession. Next weekend is Palm Sunday. Then there's Holy week. Everything is in the bulletin. Love must break through my defenses. These two weeks are for the transformation of our love, so that the men and women we touch resonate to our touch, because they see on our faces the image of Christ, the Christ who loved "to the end," to the very limit of love.