

2 Easter C

St. Patrick

April 24, 2022

Last Sunday, Easter Sunday, I talked about sign language, and the sign for the word “Jesus”—touching the palm of each hand with the middle finger of the other hand. It reminds us that, even in his risen victory, Jesus keeps his nail marks. From the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, we heard these words about the Risen Christ, and his sign language to the book’s author, John:

“Jesus touched me with his right hand and said, ‘Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I live forever and ever.’”

Yes, Jesus’ sign language to us of hope and courage.

As we started Mass this Sunday of Easter, and as we’ll do *each* of the Easter Sundays, we were all sprinkled with the baptismal water. It’s not done to get you wet. It’s for a sacred purpose—recalling and reawakening the gift of our baptism, no matter how many years ago it took place. St. Patrick’s: at Easter we spelled for one another this sign language, “Jesus,” praying that the Crucified One, now Risen, but still with the nail prints—yes, that he might deepen the gifts promised us when we were watered at our baptism. It is said beautifully in the opening prayer: **“...that all may grasp in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose Blood they have been redeemed.”**

This past Tuesday a small group of us had graveside prayer for someone intimately linked to St. Patrick’s. His name is Howard Gillespie. Everybody called him, “Pops.” For more than thirty years Pops was homeless. Before the school building was built, when there was a basketball court, two benches, and a water fountain—well, Pops would spend the night on one of the benches. More recently, he spent many a night on the front porch of the rectory. Last June, as he was crossing Union Avenue, he was hit by a truck and killed instantly. His body was kept at the morgue for eight months. No one claimed his body, and he was buried at the Shelby County Cemetery, the paupers’ cemetery.

A couple years ago, Pops was having a very bad day. I saw him sitting on one of the benches in front of the FedEx Forum. I went over and sat next to him. Pops blurted out, “You don’t understand, Father Val! We’ve *got* to have water. I loved that water fountain near the basketball court. It took care of my thirst, and I could drink from it anytime. Now, there’s no water fountain anywhere! You gotta have water, or you’ll die.”

After the graveside prayer, we poured a lot of holy water over Pops’ grave. Yes, he loved water. And, he knew how much we need it.

Our sprinkling rite throughout the Easter season is our sign language. It reminds us of our baptism, and what that greatest of sacraments still means. Ah, let me ask again: Do you remember your baptism date?

Throughout Easter we want to remember that we can drink of the Spirit any time. As Jesus says, “**For the one whom God sent...does not ration his gift of the Spirit**” (John 3:34).

Amazing, Friends, Jesus doesn’t ration the gift of his Spirit! What was promised us in our baptism, that gift Jesus still wants to pour out on us. Yes, the Risen Christ depends on us, as He did on that first petrified bunch of disciples. His right hand touches us, and he tells us: “**Do not be afraid...Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever.**”

This Easter Jesus again promises us his Spirit. This Easter he depends on us.

General Intercessions

April 24, 2022

Second Sunday of Easter B

Strengthen the faith of all consecrated in the saving waters of baptism, and help us in our unbelief; we pray to you, O Lord—

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, inspire Pope Francis and all church ministers to be the face of God's mercy and love to the world; we pray to you, O Lord—

Inspire your Church to advocate for those who do not have protective shelter, adequate food and water, and basic health care; we pray to you, O Lord—

Sustain the people of Ukraine in the midst of this unjust war; be with their refugees as they seek safety; we pray to the Lord—

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, you call us to pray for our enemies. Bless, then, Vladimir Putin and all who unleash violence in our world; we pray to you, O Lord—

John

Written in the last decade of the first century

Vs 19 “Through the gift of the Spirit, Jesus makes possible his permanent presence among his followers.”

+ Pentecost scene according to Jn Gospel

+ gift of peace: “In this eschatological moment, Jesus words are not a wish but a statement of fact.”

Vs 22 “breath of God”—reminiscent of Gn

Vs 23 “Exegetically, one can call upon Jn 20:23 for assurance that the power of forgiveness has been granted; but one cannot call upon this text as proof that the way in which a particular community exercises this power is not true to scripture.”

“As long as Jesus stood among men, one had to come to faith through the visible. Now, at the end of the Gospel, another attitude becomes possible and necessary. This is the era of the Spirit or the invisible presence of Jesus and the era of signs or appearances is passing away.”

“He remains present in the Paraclete/Spirit who is to be with the disciples forever.”

Acts

Written 85, “give or take 5 to 10 years”

Luke “a physician, the fellow worker and traveling companion of Paul... Author detectable from contents: “an educated Greek-speaker and skilled writer who knew the Jewish Scriptures in Gk and was not an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry.”

+ the resurrection explains why the early church succeeded
+ “were added” -- “a reverential passive denoting that it was God who added them; it was not the Church that added new members” (Fuller)

Rev

92-96

To the churches in the western sector of Asia Minor (Turkey)

Patmos – due to persecution, exile

On the Lord’s Day – “The Sunday context may account for the plausible echoes of Christian liturgy in the heavenly visions of the seer” (Brown).

7 gold lampstands -- written to seven churches; “also is evocative of the Jerusalem temple”

“one like a son of man” -- vision of Christ, using imagery of OT book of Daniel