

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter 2017

Where have all the people gone? One week passing. Where have all the people gone? One week ago. Where have all the people gone? Gone to Wegmans everyone. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

The first time I sang that was a few years ago when the opening of a new Wegmans coincided with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter. There had been so many people in the church on Easter Sunday who didn't come back for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter that I assumed they had gone to the Wegman's opening instead. (I don't know if there is a Wegmans here in NYC and I suppose I could have substituted Wegmans for Wal-Mart or Starbucks or any place with two syllables)

What's always fascinated me in my long tenure as a pastor is the question why so many people show up on Easter Sunday but then you don't see them again until next Easter. (Maybe Christmas) Now you see'em, now you don't).

Isn't what we do here every Sunday just as compelling, engaging, beautiful, heart-warming as Easter? You folks who are here on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter are witnesses to this. You want to be here with your brothers and sisters in Christ. You want to celebrate with each other, have your eyes opened in the breaking of the bread. Good for you! Yes, you're here because you know it's Good for you.

I don't mean to judge the folks who show up just on Easter and Christmas. Just trying to figure out why. Maybe it's because this is "another Easter, another show, from Philly Boston or Baltimore, a chance for Catholics to say hello, another Easter and another show." On Easter we do pull out all the stops,

bring in the Brass, sing the Hallelujah chorus, the church is decorated beautifully. Easter is the best show (and the price is pretty reasonable compared to tickets for Dolly, or Hamilton. (Now that I think of it it would be great if people put as much in the collection basket as they do for Broadway shows).

Speaking of Broadway shows, there is a beautiful, heart-warming, uplifting new musical called Come From Away. Anyone seen it? It has to do with the people of Gander, Newfoundland who opened their homes and their hearts to 7000 travelers from 38 planes which were forced to land there on 9/11. The backdrop is of course the horrific, inhuman events of 9/11. And the passengers of the planes are paralyzed by fear and doubt, for some time not knowing why they are there or what the future holds. And although the backdrop is the 'worst' that human beings are capable, the musical sings of the "best" that human beings are capable of as the 6000 residents of Gander do everything within their power to care for, console and allay the fears of those travelers. They give an example of community at its best, where self-sacrifice is the heart of the matter.

I mention this show because it resonates with the picture we have of the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles

They devoted themselves  
to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life,  
to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.  
Every day they devoted themselves  
to meeting together in the temple area  
and to breaking bread in their homes.  
They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,  
praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.

In this reading from Acts, we hear of how wonderfully "in tune" the community was with each other. Sounds like their "hearts were burning" at

all times. Sad to say, probably not a realistic portrait of human nature. In fact it's not long after this passage that some early Christians like Ananias and Sapphira look for their own self-interest and not the community.

The Gospel gives us a more realistic portrayal of the early disciples. They are still paralyzed by fear and doubt. They don't know what to make of the events of Jesus' crucifixion and the stories of the women who tell them about the empty tomb and their encounters with the Risen Jesus. But then suddenly, without warning the Risen Jesus is in their midst, assuring them that He is with them and they have nothing to fear. They see for themselves that Jesus is God's Today, to quote Pope Francis. Jesus is present, alive, transforming their fears and doubts into joy and confidence. And what about Thomas? He gets a "bum rap" as the doubter. All those others got to see Jesus for themselves and all he's asking is for equal time.

So, Thanks for showing up this morning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter. I'd like to think that we all showed up with the same enthusiasm and hopefulness which we heard about in Acts. But more likely, we are like those disciples in the upper room, with our fears and our doubts. I realize that the song I began with is really an anti-war song that laments the loss of lives to war. And Where have all the flowers gone has been sung for 50 years but the wars continue and young men and women lose their lives in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, too name only a few. Our fears of terror attacks on the Champs Elysee and chaos in Venezuela. And then our fears for Mother Earth when Climate change doubters rule the roost now. There is so much to fear and doubt.

But here we are and why? I think it's because we have seen the Lord. Deep down we know we encounter the Risen Jesus in our daily lives and in this place with this community.