

We Too Are the Body of Christ

a sermon preached on the

3rd Sunday of Easter

26 April 2009

at

St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

by Fr Jim McKenna
priest assistant at St Luke's
& chaplain to Bishopspark

Lection: Luke 24: 36-48

On that evening when the Apostles were gathered in the upper room with locked doors, they had the feeling that the room was haunted by absence and full of bitter-sweet memories for them.

It was here that Jesus Had washed their feet, and celebrated the Last Supper with them. It was in this room that they had sworn loyalty to him, a loyalty which didn't even see the night through.

They were wounded individually by their fear, doubt, guilt, grief and despair and they were also wounded as a community, because their unity was broken. Two of their members were missing – one, Judas, was dead, the other, Thomas, was going through a crisis of faith. At a time of pain and grief they had erected a barrier around themselves.

Jesus came to them, while they were still fearful and guilt ridden because of their cowardice and betrayal. He broke through their barrier and stood among them. He did not blame them for failing Him. There was not recrimination. Instead he brought them something they desperately needed: Peace. He said to them "Peace be with you".

That peace which is the tranquillity shown by Jesus during his life, when under pressure, and in the face of disappointments. In receiving His peace, they received His forgiveness. Suddenly the greatness and wonder of it struck them; Death had been overcome, evil had been overcome, their sins and betrayal had been overcome. Good had triumphed, love had triumphed, life had triumphed. A fresh start was possible.

Where do we fit in to this scene over two thousand years on?

At our weekly meeting of Tuesday, David and I were reflecting on the Holy Week services. Questions arose around our liturgies and splendour of the first mass of Easter.

Over the past few days I have further reflected and I remembered some words of Fr. Daniel O'Leary on this very subject, where he said –

"I am still tingling from the Vigil ceremonies and the First Mass of Resurrection, but how long will the feeling last? How do I continue to be nourished by the extravagant graces that were showered upon us during those three amazing day of the Triduum?"

We don't have to remember everything, and indeed it could be a mistake to try. In fact, it might be better to wait in silent reflection, for the surfacing of our awareness – of the special grace, and insight we need when we trust in the activity of God working within us, we will know that nothing of our experiences over the Triduum will go to waste, and that our hearts and minds will remember whatever needs to be remembered. The experiences and impact of Easter, is like the feeling we carry when we enter into a deep and loving relationship.

It is in the Eucharist that Easter is forever remembered, It was St Augustine who said at communion –

"Receive who you are – 'the Body of the Risen Christ'!"

What we have to do now, is to incarnate into our very being in a radical kind of transformation, the saving reality of what we have symbolically celebrated, first at Easter and then at every Eucharist - that we too are the 'Body of Christ'.

ALLELUIA - CHRIST IS RISEN!

Reference: D. O'Leary

j.p.mckenna@xtra.co.nz