

2nd S. of Easter.

8-4-18.

He's alive!

I'd like to share a song with you this morning that I've loved since I first heard it in the mid-80s. It's a song by an American Gospel singer called Don Francisco, and the song is called "He's alive!" The focus is on St. Peter on that first Easter Sunday morning, and just in case some of you have difficulty catching the words, they will be on the screen.

I said at the beginning that I treasure that song, for it captures magnificently something that happened three times in that Gospel reading today: three times Jesus greets the Apostles and other disciples, and tells them: "Peace be with you". No recriminations, no dressing down, no beg your pardons, but "Peace be with you", and total loving forgiveness.

To us, looking at that from a human aspect, it is totally incredible, unimaginable. And yet, looking at it from God's perspective it is absolutely right. Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx shows this in a marvellous way.

Talking about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son in their Divine nature, he affirms that their relationship is total self-gift. Every bit of love the Father gives to the Son, the Son reflects back to the Father. He holds nothing back. However, as God he can only reflect this back in a spiritual way, not in a physical way as we need to do.

So, as St. John's Gospel tells us: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He became one with us, and as one of us he showed that same totally self-giving love in a human way that as God he was able to show the Father in a Divine way, - and **to be total**, that included the surrender of his human life right up to his death on the cross. Jesus held nothing back in a love that not only reached out to his heavenly Father, but also included us, as Peter experienced in that wonderful moment when Jesus lifted him up from his knees, and looked at him with such love that it exploded in Peter's heart.

That power to love and forgive Jesus also shares with us, not only in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but also in the everyday occurrences of our life, - and why this can be so difficult for us is brought out in another aspect of today's Gospel.

We heard how Thomas was absent on that Easter Sunday night when Jesus first appeared to the disciples and gave them that wonderful power of love to forgive. When they tried to tell Thomas of what had happened he refused to believe them, and we generally put that down to his scepticism, his caution.

But there may also have been another reason: If Jesus really had appeared to them and did what they said he'd done, why were they still holed up in that upper room, with doors barred and windows fastened down? Why weren't they out in the street, proclaiming to the world that Jesus had risen, that he was alive, and that they had seen him. Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection, not only because he himself had not seen Jesus, but also because they didn't show the signs that would give force to their words.

And that applies to us as well. Do we show with our life that we believe that Jesus is risen, - that He has shared with us his power to love and forgive, his power to heal and give life?

Could it be that what people lack in the world around us is not faith in God, but faith in us, who claim to be his disciples, but whose lives don't always show that Christ is a living presence in our lives?

Jesus showed Thomas his wounds, the signs of his love. The question that our readings challenge us with today is: "Where are the signs of our love, - that others too may believe?"

Can we too, with Peter, explode in the joy that shouts out: "He's alive!"

HE'S ALIVE!

The gates and doors were barred
and all the windows fastened down,
I spent the night in sleeplessness
and rose at every sound;
half in hopeless sorrow
and half in fear the day
would find the soldiers breakin' through
to drag us all away.

And just before the sunrise
I heard something at the wall.
The gate began to rattle
and a voice began to call.
I hurried to the window,
looked down into the street,
expecting swords and torches
and the sound of soldiers' feet.

But there was no one there but Mary,
so I went down to let her in,
John stood there beside me,
as she told me where she'd been.
She said they have moved him in the night
and none of us knows where.
The stone's been rolled away
and now his body isn't there.

We both ran toward the garden,
then John ran on ahead.
We found the stone and empty tomb,
just the way that Mary said.
But the winding sheet they wrapped Him in
was just an empty shell,
and how and where they'd taken Him
was more than I could tell.

Oh, something strange had happened there,
just what I did not know.
John believed a miracle
but I just turned to go.
Circumstance and speculation
couldn't lift me very high,
'cause I'd seen them crucify Him,
then I saw Him die.

Back inside the house again
the guilt and anguish came.
Everything I'd promised Him
just added to my shame.
When at last I came to choices
I denied I knew His name,
and even if he was alive
it wouldn't be the same.

Suddenly the air was filled
with a strange and sweet perfume.
Light that came from everywhere
drove the shadows from the room.
Jesus stood before me
with his arms held open wide,
and I fell down on my knees
and just clung to Him and cried.

He raised me to my feet,
and as I looked into his eyes,
love was shining out from Him
like sunlight from the skies.
Guilt and my confusion
disappeared in sweet release,
and every fear I'd ever had
just melted into peace.

He's alive, He's alive,
He's alive and I'm forgiven,
Heavens gates are open wide.
He's alive, and I'm forgiven,
heavens gates are open wide.
He's alive. He's alive.
He's alive and I'm forgiven,
heavens gates are open wide.
He's alive, He's alive, He's alive.