

Homily
3rd Sunday of Easter – B

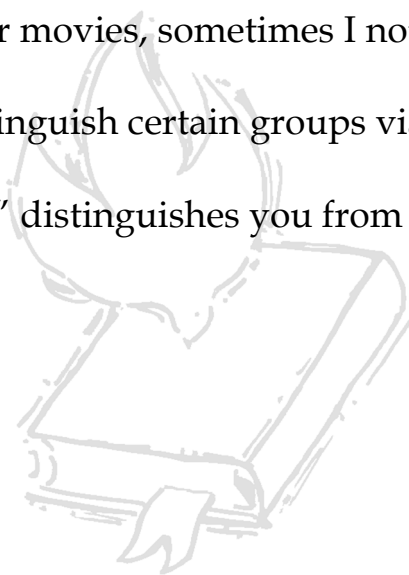
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
April 17-18, 2021

Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19
Ps 4: 2, 4, 7-8, 9
1 Jn 2: 1-5a
Lk 24: 35-48

YOU PEOPLE!!! *YOU PEOPLE need to learn this or that about life.* “You People” is a mantra which I have heard from others and sometimes have used throughout my own life. “You people,” means essentially, **YOU** – the problem lies with **YOU**.

We have used the term “You People” on those of certain communities, those of certain cultures, races, language or even ways of life. We generalize characteristics and the ways of life of various communities by bunching them up and associating stereotypes associated with them, as if every person in a particular group act in the exact same way.

Sometimes when I watch television shows or movies, sometimes I notice that the media or those in public discourse distinguish certain groups via the stereotype because the phrase “You People” distinguishes you from me



and them from us. “You people” often gives the impression that I am (or we are) better than you people or distinct from “You People.”

I thought about this phrase in regard to the first reading from Acts today. I am not necessarily disagreeing with St. Peter in what he had to say to the faithful in the Acts of the Apostles. What St. Peter had to say in Acts is that the people around him allowed Jesus to be nailed to the cross and die. In my reflection, however, it was not just the people whom Peter addressed who allowed Jesus to die on the cross - *Peter* also allowed Jesus to die on that cross as well. The first pope of the Church denied Jesus three times prior to our Lord’s death. Outside of the one exception in John’s gospel, none of the apostles stood at the foot of the cross to defend our Lord.

Essentially through what we failed to do (the Confiteor), *we all* put Jesus on the cross. The apostles were afraid; they denied Jesus. Our predecessors were negatively influenced and in a mob mentality, the human race was disobedient to God. When Peter realized how he betrayed his Lord, he wept, according to the scriptures (Mt 26: 75; Mk 14: 72; Lk 22: 62). We also know that when the day came for Pentecost, when the day came for the

apostles to be commissioned, to go out into the world, Peter certainly knew better what he needed to do and he was willing to give his life. In the process (see Acts 2: 14-41) that Peter realized the error of his ways and decided to walk the straight narrow path strengthened by the presence of Christ in his life. Even in today's gospel, we see that the apostles had doubted. They doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead that it was Jesus in the flesh; this was the story we read about the "Doubting Apostle Thomas" from the Second Sunday of Easter.

Last week, I preached about doubt, despair and selfishness words that Peter Kreeft used as the opposite of faith hope and Christian charity. The whole idea is that all of us are sinners, *all of us*, you and me, and that all of us need redemption. I need to keep reminding myself that the first person to whom I am preaching is me and if I am not living the gospel message, what good am I?

How can I preach it to you if I am not following the gospel message myself? I know that we are told that as long as the priest uses the proper form and matter (as long as the priest uses unleavened bread and the prescribed wine at Mass) and if the priest says the proper words, then the

mass is valid. That said, if I am not properly disposed to do what I am supposed to do, the Mass is certainly illicit. I have to be properly disposed to celebrate this Mass licitly and validly. I have to be as good of a Christian as I am calling all of you to be.

I have to be in good standing in order for me to have a chance to get to heaven. I have to be a pure vessel... and I too am a sinner. I too am part of the “we” – I have to do my part as a member of the body of Christ. When we come together and pray together so that God can instruct us in the way we are living a proper life, then we understand that all of us, *all of us* through Adam and Eve, have received original sin but through baptism have been regenerated into the bride of Christ. Through baptism, that spiritual mark of faith has now been imprinted on all of our souls as a community.

As long as we are baptized and get cleansed from That Original Sin, if we walk the path, if we go to confession, if we pray together, if we play together, if we support each other together, if we do these things together, as a body of Christ, then we live according to the way Christ has instructed us – we are no longer “those people” – we all are united together in faith

and view each person in creation as essential, regardless how a government might define us. If we are living as a community of believers, and I am not just preaching to you, I am preaching to myself as well.

A few days ago, a great example of this “community” took place in my life. Until we find a permanent solution over at St. Patrick’s, I decided to start cutting grass at the parish myself. I realized that no lawnmowers at the parish worked – the riding lawnmower still had the snowblower attached to it and the three riding lawnmowers could not start. Frustrated with the status of our cutting apparatuses, I decided to buy a manual lawnmower and started to cut the grass by hand.

A parishioner caught me in this act one afternoon and started taking pictures of me for blackmail. The parishioner was riding a huge lawnmower as he made fun of me with my little “put put” machine. Taking pity on my, this Good Samaritan helped me finish the job I started and began to talk to others in the neighborhood about helping me. The next thing I knew, a bunch of folks with lawnmowers helped finish a project I started alone. The body of Christ works wonders – I do my part and others pitch in to do theirs.

Faith and the Church is never about “YOU PEOPLE”; the Church is about all of us. And I understand, at least my perspective is there are two types of people in life. There is me and my sins, and then there is everyone else. I must look at everyone as a sacred person of God. I must treat each person as a sacred person of God. My form of discrimination is if I am not treating someone like I would want them to treat me. I am discriminating. And the same goes for all of us because we are taught that do unto others, love thy neighbor... forgive us, our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. These basic teachings of the faith tell us that every single person is a sacred creature. Every single person deserves respect and love.

In this line of thought, I keep going back to a parent that once said to me, “Father, I really do love my children, but there are moments where I *do not like* what they are doing very much.” Can we not say this about a whole bunch of folks? That said, I think about the fact that for each time that we condemn someone, then we are inviting God to do the same thing to us.

God *wants* us to work together; God *wants* us to be loved and *wants* us to love one another. God *wants* us to get to heaven all of us even when we act as if we do not. When we can separate ourselves from our selfishness,

when we can dedicate ourselves to taking care of the other, to realize it was never about me but always about the **WE**, and everyone else, then we understand what it is to be like Christ. It is then we are able to see and find the kingdom of heaven because our perspective of faith becomes much clearer in the process.

For me, the words of St. Angela Merici best summarize the homily I have just preached when she said,

“The last word that I address to you and one I urge upon you with all the ardor of my soul, is that you live in harmony, united together in one heart and one will. Be bound to one another by the bonds of charity, treating each other with respect, helping one another, bearing with each other in Christ Jesus: if you really try to live like this, there is no doubt that the Lord, our God, will be in your midst.”

“La última palabra que os dirijo y a la que insto con todo el ardor de mi alma, es que vivas en armonía, unidos en un solo corazón y voluntad. Estén unidos el uno al otro por los lazos de caridad, tratándose unos a otros con respeto, ayudándose unos a otros, llándose unos con otros en Cristo Jesús: si realmente tratan de vivir así, no hay duda de que el Señor, nuestro Dios, estará en medio de ustedes.”

Let us understand the importance and the power of the “we” – it is never about **YOU PEOPLE** or me being better than you but about all of us working together in building the body of Christ. Let us never forget what

God was willing to do for the entire world. Let us realize that God wants every single creature in the world to bind together as a member of this body of Christ.

Let us understand what God was willing to do for us, *for all of us*, so that we can reach heaven. Let us acknowledge how all of us metaphorically denied Christ as the Messiah, how all of us metaphorically put Christ on the cross and how Christ nevertheless died for all of us so that those who follow his example have a chance at redemption. Let us learn that lesson of the “we” together, as we share this message of faith, hope and charity - **TOGETHER** - with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.