Jubilee Homily

Thank you, Father Colletti—and each one of you, for helping celebrate this special day.

I’d like to reflect a bit on today’s readings, and then talk about the icon that’s on the cover of your worship aid, and then say something about what they tell us for us today.

Over the last 6 weeks, we’ve heard stories of the early church, and the impassioned, clear witness of the disciples. Truly, these are accounts of the church’s honeymoon. People selling their homes, giving the money to the poor, and living simply in a community together. Peter healing a lame man thru the power of the risen Jesus. Philip traveling to Samaria, preaching and healing and baptizing people who had previously been rejected by the Jews.

What a transformation!!! These disciples, many of whom had run away from the Cross, many of whom had hidden in fear and discouragement, now embraced a new way of being together, of supporting one another as they reached out to evangelize, to teach, to heal, to serve and celebrate and reveal the Good News of God’s unconditional love.

How did it happen? I think today’s readings can help us understand their transformation, and what will help us who are called to be the same kind of teaching, healing, serving, evangelizing community.

First of all, after the Ascension, they gathered in the Upper Room with its memories of the last Supper. And Mary was with them, along with other women. And they prayed. The bedrock, the source, the energy and strength for being Church together, had its source in prayer. That needs to be the source and strength of our ministry too.

And what were they praying about? A few days before, at the Ascension, they received their mission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. What a huge mandate for a small band of ordinary people!

So Jesus, his person, his teachings, his way of being with people, had to be what they prayed about. They must have shared stories, remembering Jesus’s “words, his attitudes, his relationships with people, his way of relating to all created things” (CSS #19). Only by studying Jesus could they carry out their mission.

I believe that the icon on your worship aid captures the spirit of this time in the Upper Room. It is a favorite of mine, not only because it is beautiful, but also because of its title. *Etre sur terre le Coeur de Dieu*—to be on earth the Heart of God—this phrase captures the essence of my vocation as a Religious of the Sacred Heart. It also captures the mission of the Church and the
mission of all of us here. It is what we are called to by our baptism. Each one of us has this challenging—and deeply evocative—vocation.

To be on earth the Heart of God!! To BE God’s mercy, strength, compassion, generosity, understanding, God’s unconditional love—to BE all that, is our call. However will we be able to do that, to be that? I think the icon, and Jesus’s words in today’s Gospel, offer us some help.

Look at the icon. Jesus is showing us his pierced hands and the wound in his side ... showing us that God loves us with a human heart, a wounded heart. Doesn’t each one of us have a heart that has been wounded in some way? And he invites us to become like him and to share his mission. The icon not only reveals God’s love for us, but it also invites us to become what we contemplate. So, like Jesus, we minister out of, and/or despite, our own weakness and woundedness.

Notice how, as you look at the icon, your eyes move from the lower left of the picture, up toward the Risen Jesus. And notice how all the disciples and Mary are looking up at him too—with their hands outstretched. And, notice how Jesus is looking at them, with arms open to embrace. It’s in this posture, us looking at Jesus, studying his actions, words, contemplating his Heart pierced for love of us, that we learn how to be on earth the Heart of God. And it is in allowing God, allowing Jesus, to look at us, with a long, loving look, that we draw strength to BE God’s generous, merciful, compassionate, strong, understanding, unconditional love. It does happen, little by little.

There’s a wonderful part in our RSCJ constitutions that says, “The Spirit dwelling within us gradually transforms us, enabling us through his power to remove whatever hinders his action. The Spirit unites and conforms us to Jesus, and makes us sensitive to his presence within ourselves, in others, and in all that happens.” (CSS #21)

We have Jesus’s promise for that. At the Last Supper he prayed “for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours, and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them.” Imagine! We are His, and therefore we are the Father’s.

What’s more, Jesus said, I have been glorified in them. Jesus has been glorified in them, and in us. Our weaknesses and vulnerabilities aren’t a problem for Jesus. All we need is to keep looking at Him, and know that there is our strength.
We also have Mary. Notice how central she is in the icon. She is the first disciple; she is the strength for the disciples as they waited in the Upper Room. The wise woman who knew Jesus’ Heart—and who will help us to know his Heart if we ask her. Her hands are held out, open, in her “yes” to God. She can teach us to say “yes” too.

We have, each one of us, a gift, a challenge, and a responsibility—to BE God’s Heart on earth. Today, I thank God, and all of you, for the gift of this vocation, and for the love and support you have been for me in trying to live its challenge. Together, as a community and, like the disciples in the Upper Room, looking at Jesus, we have all we need to be God’s heart on earth.

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