

Change of Heart – Homily for Easter 3, Acts 2 (Peter’s Sermon)

Have you ever had a change of heart? You know, at first, you are resistant to do something; in fact, you really don’t want to do it. Perhaps as a child you don’t want to clean your room. Or, you would really rather avoid wearing that mask because it’s uncomfortable and you hate it. Or, you refuse to budge on an argument. But then, something happens. You reconsider, you ponder, and you change your mind. Something helps you to have a change of heart. I’m certain that we can all relate to this in some way or another, especially today with what I’m calling quarantine fatigue. After all, we are all probably pretty tired of the restrictions that are important for our community. But, then I have a change of heart. I ponder why it is I’m doing this and I recognize the temporary need to gently ease back in to the new ways we can again be together.

Today, we hear a very powerful story of the first sermon that is preached right after the Holy Spirit came to the people of God. In fact, we might even say that this particular sermon in the book of Acts occurs during the first ever assembled Christian worship service. Did you know that the writer of the Gospel of Luke also wrote the book of Acts? In fact, Luke and Acts were meant to be paired together as one continuous story. Of course, we often forget this today, tending to instead read the stories of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles as they come up in our weekly readings or in a study series, as this particular part of scripture does today in our weekday worship.

But, if you read both accounts together, it would be interesting to see, and in my opinion, powerful to hear that the word “heart” is used a great deal by the writer of these two books. In Luke chapter 2, we hear that Mary, the mother of Jesus, after hearing the stories of the shepherds telling abroad that they had seen the angels proclaiming a Savior had come; the author writes that “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart”. And, again, in Luke chapter 24, as two disciples travel to Emmaus and encounter the living, risen Christ, after they realize that it is Jesus, they exclaim, “Were not our hearts burning when He opened up the scriptures to us?” And, today in the reading we have from Acts, after a powerful sermon by Peter, the people are “cut to the heart” after hearing about the death of Jesus and ask what they should do. In response, Peter tells them to repent, which the Greek word there that is used is “Metanoia”. Literally, the word Metanoia means “change of heart”. In fact, in , those are words used in a few of the other English

translation: "Change your hearts," Peter exclaims, rather than using the word repent. Heart language is used a great deal by the one who wrote these very special pieces of the Gospel message.

Having a change of heart – it's actually what our daily life entails as the people of God who follow a living, risen Lord. After Peter declares to the 3,000 there to have a change of heart, Metanoia, to repent, he tells them to be baptized. Each day, in the waters of baptism, we ask God to create in us new hearts, to change, to turn back to the One who loves us, so that we may live a life as forgiven people.

But, this is a daily drowning, not a onetime deal. Each day is a new chance, a new change, a new returning as we die with Christ to sin and rise with Christ to a forgiven clean slate. This we do because of metanoia – an intentional remembering that we are a people in need each day to have a change of heart.

Today, where do you need a metanoia, a change of heart? I'm going to guess you have something that needs changing as we all do. These are strange, difficult times to wade through, dear Siblings in Christ. We ask Christ to help change us first, so that we may be the change we need to see in the world.

Amen.