

## Third Sunday Ordinary C

Every year the Jews of today celebrate Yom Hashoah which translates into "The Day of the Whirlwind". During this celebration, they cry in their hearts for the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust in Europe at the time of Nazi Germany. They also recall all of the people who risked their freedom, their very lives during that horrific time to fight against that evil.

The phrase "Always Remember, and Never Forget" keeps that memory alive and, sometimes, painfully fresh in the Jewish people, even as the number of living Holocaust survivors are becoming fewer and fewer. This remembering insures that that level of evil and genocide might never be allowed to occur again.

"Always Remember and Never Forget" is a key sentiment of our humanity, and throughout the history of humankind, we have striven to find ways of recalling... and thrived amidst... memories.

In our first reading, the people of Israel have returned to Jerusalem after a long period of exile. There was not one among them had a living memory of what it was like to live in their homeland. All that they knew was a foreign land and a mixing of the ways of their ancestors with the ways of others.

The reading of Torah, the words of promise and law of the God who delivered them from slavery in Egypt to freedom in their own land, caused the people to weep in sadness over what was lost to them, but also in joy for what is now found. The Words of God served to recall in full what was only remembered in fragments. A memory is instilled that day in them that was at the same time both ancient and new.

And just as in the days of Ezra, the Jews of Jesus' time, in His home town of Nazareth, were gathering to remember. They read from the sacred scrolls so that they might be reminded of the goodness of God, and the love of a God who fulfills His promises. It was a time of rejoicing even in the midst of Roman oppression.

The passage Jesus read was a reminder of justice, of peace, of righteousness, of love, forgiveness and joy. They were the words of a

promise, given long ago, kept alive in the re-telling.

And then...Jesus gives His very first homily. One sentence, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." With that, the words of promise leapt from history to a present day reality.

Every week, we gather together for the same purpose. We hear the words of God so that we might "Always Remember, and Never Forget" the love God has for us, the plans God has for us. We recall the life of Jesus and His Apostles. We learn about our Jewish ancestors and the beginnings of the Catholic Church. We recall our history as a people of God, so that we might know to whom we belong and to whom we will one day return.

And just as Jesus' first homily announced the fulfillment of the words they heard, the homily in our day "should" serve a similar purpose. To announce that in Christ all of the promises of God are fulfilled. That justice and peace are ours to live, and more importantly, ours to share. It is an opportunity to "Remember and Never Forget" that what God did two, three even five thousand years ago, He still does today.

Our history as a people of God is always both ancient and new for we are now what our Christian ancestors were....we are the Church.

And isn't it amazing that God has chosen us, with all of our failings and inadequacies to be His voice and hands and feet in this world? Though made of sinners, we are the Bride of Christ, radiant and glorious.

In our second reading, St. Paul goes to great lengths to describe the Church. He tells us that, though we are many.... with many gifts.... we are **one body**, the Body of Christ.

Paul helps us to remember that, even though we are one, we are also individuals, unique and each of us precious to God. Each of us has gifts that are given to us, by God and nurtured by His Graces and the Holy Spirit so that we might grow in holiness both individually and as a family.

Our gift, our uniqueness is, in fact, a vital part of Christ's Body. So vital that when any one of us is missing from the assembly, we, as a Body, are not

whole.

If that is true of us who are faithful, what does that say about the completeness of the Body of Christ in regards to those Catholics who have, for whatever reason, allowed themselves to be separated from us?

And what about our brothers and sisters of other Christian faiths, those who are not free to celebrate with us all of the Sacramental gifts of the Church? What a great wound that is to the Body.

And there are those among us, in our neighborhoods, our work places, perhaps even our own homes who are called to the Church, but have not yet begun the journey. What graces, what joy are we missing without them?

And what does any of this have to do with the mantra of "Always Remember, and Never Forget"?

As Yom Hashoah celebrates, there is evil in the world, but great good exists beside it. That is a noble truth and everyone is capable of understanding this by human reason alone.

But what people need to experience, to know for themselves, is what it is we celebrate each time we gather. To know that God was and is active in the world....through and in His Church! They need to know that in Christ, Good has overcome the evil and that this Church is His instrument of justice and charity.

Ours is a mystical experience, one of body, spirit and soul, a memory of Grace and Salvation that is meant to be shared.

That is our challenge as the Body of Christ....to reach out... to welcome... to share that memory that is Christ himself. But we must start as, individuals, as St. Paul calls us, the eyes, the hands, the ears of the body, to seek out....always in love.....those who are separate from us.

That is our history, as well as our future.