

Rev. Derek Fairman

2nd Sunday of Easter B

The second reading from the First Letter of St. John tells us that the victory that conquers the world is our faith. Today, that might seem hollow. The Catholic faith seems to be on the losing side in our culture. The kinds of values that are important to our Catholic faith seem to be slipping away. So how could it be true that the victory that conquers the world is our faith?

Keep in mind what St. John means when he writes about “the world.” He does not mean the earth or God’s creation, which is good. He writes about the world as a culture built on false values, a culture of death as Pope St. John Paul II spoke about, as opposed to the culture of life. In the world, virtues are looked upon with disdain, while vices are applauded. Things that are only passing, that do not last a long time, are treasured instead of what really matters. The glory of the world is a selfish glorification; instead of glorifying God, humanity marvels at itself.

The world is something that leads us away from God. The world is something that we do not have to look far and wide to find. We can find plenty of ways in which a culture built on false values infects our own environment. In fact, “the world” makes its way into our thinking and in the choices that we make. The world makes its way into our souls. Sometimes we notice the ways in which we need to change, but then other times our minds and hearts reflect the world’s values without us even noticing.

So, when St. John writes of the victory of the Catholic faith over the world, we must keep in mind that he doesn’t just mean that the Catholic faith will achieve victory at the end of time. He doesn’t mean only that the Catholic faith will overcome the unbelief and idolatry that were rampant at the time. Besides these, he also means that the Catholic faith will overcome “the world” in each of our souls.

The Lord Jesus overcame the world through His death and Resurrection. He did so in a hidden way. To the world, it looked as if the Lord Jesus had lost. He died and that was it; once He died, all His miracles and teachings would come to nothing. However, we know that His death was not the end but the beginning. In a hidden way He overcame His enemies and the hatred that opposed Him. He overcame evil, including death. He appeared to His disciples in order to bring about their faith in His Resurrection and to help them to share in His victory.

The faith that the disciples had in the Risen Lord Jesus spread to all parts of the world. The faith of His believers, then and now, flows from the power of His Resurrection. The power

of His Resurrection destroys the power of evil in each one of us, if we allow that power to take root in us. When we do, that power will overcome unbelief, doubts, sin and whatever else that the Lord wishes to overcome. The power of the Lord's Resurrection overcomes the world, including the way it forms itself in our souls.

Now, we have received faith through Baptism. That faith has been planted in our souls already. However, that seed of faith needs to grow and to be nourished. If it is not, the world will take over. We need values, and if we don't receive values from our faith, the world's values will slip in to take over. Not only will the values of the world take over, but we can enjoy having those values and will not want to let go.

St. John likely wrote this letter in part to encourage those who were having trouble with their faith, or who were persecuted for their faith. He wrote this letter and this passage to help the readers to understand that they had nothing to fear from the world. They should console themselves with the knowledge that the world has no power in the face of Christ's victory. They share in that victory by their faith.

This message is for us as well. Rather than being afraid of the power that the world of false values seems to have, we ask the Lord to help us put our confidence in the power of Christ's victory over death. We ask the Lord to help us to recognize the power of His Resurrection in our souls. Even though the world seems to win, it is the world's victory that is hollow; the Lord's triumph over sin and death will last forever.

The Lord's mercy also endures forever. This second Sunday of Easter is Divine Mercy Sunday, and we see the Lord's mercy in the Gospel passage. The Lord overcomes the fears of the apostles, since they were afraid that what happened to the Lord Jesus might happen to them. The Lord overcomes the doubts of Saint Thomas. The Lord forgives the apostles for abandoning Him during His Passion and Death. The Lord forgives Saint Thomas for His doubts.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to help us put our confidence in the power of His Resurrection. We ask the Lord to help us realize that He is more powerful than the world, despite the way that things might appear. We ask the Lord to drive from us whatever belongs to the world. We ask the Lord to forgive us for the times that we have put our trust in the world instead of Him.