

## **Homily for September 12 – 24th Sunday.**

**Last week I mentioned that in one outline of Mark’s gospel, the first half of the gospel could be seen as introducing the Mystery of Jesus. Today we begin to be in the second half of the Gospel, where The Mystery is revealed.**

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**It is good to review what we mean by this word Mystery. The word, as it is used in the Church, is not like a detective mystery where clues lead to the answer of a riddle. I know that some of you have memories from your childhood when you were asking lots of questions about the Trinity. And you remember an adult ending the conversation with, “it’s a mystery.” But the word does not mean that we have beliefs that do not make sense. At the end of a conversation, the words, “it is a mystery” is not meant to end the inquiry. It is an invitation.**

**The ancient use of the word mystery does not refer to a puzzle to be solved. A mystery is a reality to be experienced. It is a life to be entered into. It is only in that understanding that we might suggest there is no answer to the question. The object of a mystery is bigger than one or two sentences.**

**A mystery is like the ocean – vast and deep and unable to be fully taken in even within a lifetime. And like the ocean, a mystery is something to go into. We can know quite a lot about the ocean by studying books on it. It is quite another thing to stand on the shore, to walk in, to boat and swim and dive into it.**

**I used to, when I talked about the Sacraments as mysteries, take an onion and begin to peel it. A mystery is like that, there is always another layer. Of course, no matter how much I washed my hands, they smelled like an onion the rest of the day. A Mystery is like that. Its scent hangs on.**

**God has made this world full of mysteries. Each person we meet is a mystery. Husbands and wives, parents and children, all know what it means that these people we know so well are still mysteries that we learn more and more about each day. At the end of each day, we don’t give up trying to figure them out – we just stop trying and instead celebrate them and the gift they are to us.**

**The Sacraments are mysteries because we meet God in them. And God, the creator of each human being, is even more of a mystery to live. And God wants**

**us to live in His mysterious life with Him for eternity. And this life is not boring. This life is not just standing on a cloud with a harp. As peaceful as that image is, a lot of people use it to illustrate why they reject being with God. It looks boring. But life with God is not boring. It is mysterious. More mysterious than the ocean. More mysterious than a universe fourteen billion years old and yet forty-six billion light years across.**

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**The statements of faith we have in the Creed are our Mysteries. We did not create them. God revealed them to us. We understand them as we live them and let them permeate us, soaking into us like milk in a Tres Leche Cake. The scenes from the Gospels we meditate on in the Rosary we call Mysteries. And in the gospel - as Jesus explains and shows what it means that He is the Messiah, it is the revelation of the Mystery of Him and His mission.**

**Today, Jesus affirms Peter's declaration, "You are the Christ." Then Jesus orders them to not tell anyone. The revelation that He is the Christ - the Messiah - is still to be treated as a secret. And we soon find out why.**

**Our Lord now begins to reveal what it means that He is the Messiah and how as the Messiah he will bring about the Kingdom of God. He must suffer, be rejected by the religious leaders, be put to death, and rise in three days.**

**Peter then rebukes (or scolds, criticizes) Jesus. In Matthew, we hear why Peter tried to correct Our Lord. Peter doesn't want this happening to Our Lord. (And we might personally agree. He is, after all, Our Lord.) So even the top man in Jesus' group of apostles, who recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, can't accept what Jesus is saying.**

**So Christ then needs to rebuke Peter in return. Peter needs to open up his thinking to the Mystery of God's ways. It will take time.**

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**The mystery that is revealed over the rest of this gospel is that God's triumph is precisely tied up with allowing Satan to do his worst. The Resurrection is linked to the Cross. Suffering can be redemptive. It is through service that one rules. The last is first and the first last. In our Weakness, God's strength is revealed.**

**It was not just a mystery back then for Peter. It is not just a mystery for people who today ask why we have statues of Christ on the Cross when He is no longer there.**

**It is a mystery for us today. We regularly ask the same questions over and over again. “Why do bad things happen to good people?” “Why are my prayers for the end of the sufferings of others not being answered?”**

**God does answer. But God’s answer is to reveal - a mystery. The mystery includes: God is Love; Love gives itself to others; Christ emptied Himself, He lowered Himself to serve us and lift us up.**

**When we enter into this divine greatness, we find that it embraces and includes smallness. It involves making ourselves humble. And yes – that means making ourselves vulnerable. We might be stepped on. But we take that risk in order to lift people up.**

**Anyone with a pet knows what it means to risk being bitten by their injured dog when trying to tend to the hurting limb.**

**Helping those who hurt us – that is harder to wrap our minds around. But that is part of the mystery of the Cross. So we still need to hear Our Lord – who did not deserve the Cross – tell us that the Cross is part of His mission.**

**And since it is a part of His mission, it is a part of our mission. We are to share in the Cross precisely because we are meant to enter into that kind of love. This is hard to fathom.**

**And so at the end of each day, we lay down our efforts to figure Him out. And we simply celebrate Him who is divine mystery of cross and resurrection – divine mystery of Love that suffers that we may share His glory.**