

Sermon by Vicar Tamika Jancewicz
Sunday, April 15, 2018
3rd Sunday of Easter
Luke 24.36b-48
“The Legacy of Christ”

In today's gospel reading we find ourselves once again with the resurrected Christ who appears to his disciples, but unlike last week, we have no doubting Thomas—there is doubt and fear in all everyone there, but Jesus still points to his wounds and gives the disciples a chance to touch him and see that he is real. He is not a ghost or zombie, they're not hallucinating, and to further assure them that he is really real, he asks for some food. And I'm not sure if you missed the humor in that, but think about how startling that must have been. Jesus shows up and says, “Peace be with you. It's ok, I'm real. See look! Cool. Now can I have something to eat, please?”

But Jesus' asking for food makes a lot of sense, besides showing that he is a real human in full flesh, Jesus eats a lot in Luke's gospel, he eats with sinners and tax collectors, he eats with Pharisees and lawyers, he is a guest in many people's houses like Zacchaeus, and he takes this one last time to eat among his disciples, and like a beautiful nod to his feeding the 5,000 they give him fish. And the disciples are aw-struck by this. Can you imagine seeing a loved one that you know is dead coming back in full flesh, looking you in your eyes, assuring you with peace and asking you to have a meal with them just one last time? Wouldn't you have an ounce of disbelief and wonder where they have come from? Wouldn't you still, in that disbelief have joy? These are the emotions we hear about the disciples just before Jesus eats in their presence and then drops his last and final instructions to them, and to us. He opens our minds to the fulfillment of the scriptures, in his suffering death and his resurrection after the third day. We now have the knowledge, and what we don't get to read is verse 49, where he promises the coming of the Holy Spirit which will further equip them and us to proclaim the gospel to all nations. He leaves his legacy.

It is something to a person's legacy, or what they leave behind, that keeps them here with us when they pass away. Sometimes that legacy can come in forms of money and other tangible objects. Sometimes it's the works they have done that leaves us wondering if they were still alive what else would they do. Sometimes they've been with us for a pretty long time, and they leave their wisdom and knowledge to glean from. No matter the form, when someone leaves a legacy, we can be assured there is a part of them that still lives on and we can hold onto those things for comfort and peace when we miss them the most.

We can find two such examples of people who left a legacy behind most recently. One example is Marielle Franco, a black, bisexual, Brazilian councilwoman and social activist who spent much of her political life fighting against the injustices against poor and marginalized peoples by the militia and police in the Brazilian favelas, or slums. Franco was assassinated last month at the age of 38, and she spoke up against police brutality and the numerous unlawful and unjust execution against mainly black and poor

people—specifically black women who continue to die brutal deaths without any recognition. In fact in her last article published two days after she was assassinated, she points out the dangers of the military occupation in the streets of the slums that perpetuate the violence, and ends in the deaths of many unknown victims and all this for the sake of elections and control in Brazil, and because these are poor and mainly black peoples, their stories would not be heard had it not been for her willingness to speak. But her legacy continues. Thousand continue to protest and demand justice for her death, and the world is now watching as military personal swarm in to silence the voices. Maybe Franco's legacy isn't one of purity or innocence, but she spoke up for the poor and marginalized. She brought the issues of those whose voices are often silenced to the table just as Jesus did when he associated himself with those pushed out in society.

Another person whose legacy lives on, despite whatever uncertain paths, is Winnie Mandela. Known by many names, such as mother Africa, momma Winnie, and revolutionary. She was known for her strength and will power, during the days of apartheid South Africa, as she endured brutality, a separation from her husband, Nelson Mandela, for many years and many other unthinkable things that many can only imagine. Unlike Franco, momma Winnie, lived to see the age of 81. Again her legacy in South Africa is not one of pure innocence, but her willingness to fight against the evils of apartheid for the freedom of her people, lives on through the many who survive the still brewing aftermath of the apartheid. Just as Jesus brought others into community that were ignored, shamed, and left outside the walls of the rest because of who they were.

Both Marielle Franco and Winnie Mandela are examples of how despite these very real, flawed, and often broken selves, God is able and does use that very broken human form to save us again and again. And as Pastor Renata so beautifully pointed out last week, we are once again invited to gaze at the wounds of Christ. We are invited to touch and see that he is real, and that his reconciling love is for the here and now. With both of these women, we are directed to look and see the scars of our humanity. We are invited to see where we continually fall short of truly loving our neighbor, and experience the wholeness and goodness of Christ promise of forgiveness of our sins, and evil we knowingly and unknowingly do to each other. They are examples of how it doesn't take the perfect person to stand where Christ stands in the margins. So yes, look and see that Christ is real because there something unbelievable, something so marvelous, in the joy we find when we see this word made flesh. Touch his wounds. See his scars. There's something to behold in the resurrected body of Christ.

And Christ's legacy, is unlike that of our human sheros and heros. The legacies of our sheros can be something tangible but they are still finite. Christ leaves us with something more. Something eternal through the gift of the Holy Spirit. And unlike the imperfect examples we can lift up, Christ's peace is perfect in all the ways. Jesus' legacy is not dead it is resurrected. And his resurrection is a promise in the world of the resurrection of our great legends, of saints and servants, people like Marielle Franco and Winnie Mandela who despite their flawed existence believed in a more reconciled and just world. And with each legacy left behind, God is giving us one more time to see

Jesus in the midst of our fear and the evil around us. God is letting us see where true peace resides despite the air strikes and unjust wars. Despite the violence and divisions. Despite the pain and suffering. Despite the continued disregard for all of creation. Christ is continually giving us an opportunity to touch him and see that he is real. He opens our minds. Fills us with the Holy Spirit, and lead us to a way of peace.

So, yes, marvel, wonder, perhaps in disbelief, but don't forget the joy we get when we see him. Because we have a savior that goes beyond the walls and locked doors. He gives us something tangible to have. And it's not just ours to have it's there to share—that joy, that peace, that eternal goodness. We can share that joy, that peace, in this world here and now. We can hope for a more just world like that of Marielle and Winnie. Because it began in Jerusalem but it didn't stop there. Amen.