

Homily – The Desires of Easter

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“Once upon a time there lived a sea lion who had lost the sea.

He lived in a country known as the barren lands. High on a plateau, far from any coast, it was a place so dry and dusty that it could only be called a desert. A kind of coarse grass grew in patches here and there, and a few trees were scattered across the horizon. But mostly, it was dust. And sometimes wind, which together with the dust make one very thirsty. Of course, it must seem strange to you that such a beautiful creature should wind up in a desert at all. He was, mind you, a sea lion. But things like this do happen.

How the sea lion came to the barren lands, no one can remember. It all seemed so very long ago. So long, in fact, it appeared as though he had always been there. Not that he belonged in such an arid place. How could that be? He was, after all, a sea lion. But as you know, once you have lived so long in a certain spot, no matter how odd, you come to think of it as home.”

Part of our human condition is that we are like this sea lion. Every one of us leads lives that are not as grand as they could be. We live small. We have covered over the immortal diamond that is inside of us. We have even forgotten that we were made in the image of God, and that we could be much, much more. We have forgotten that Christ is in all and around all.

For many of us we are even uncomfortable being reminded that our lives fall short. After all, we are working so very hard. We are doing as much as we can. We have grown to like the life we have. After all, we do live here on the Central Coast.

And how dare we be reminded that our children and grandchildren are like a sea lion in the desert. Our children and grandchildren are perfect. They are pure. They are beautiful. Our grandson, Carter isn't yet like a sea lion, is he? Not yet.

“There was a time, many years back, when the sea lion knew he was lost. In those days, he would stop every traveler he met to see if they might help him find his way back to the sea.

But no one seemed to know the way.

On he searched, but never finding. After years without success, the sea lion took refuge beneath a solitary tree beside a very small water hole. The tree provided

refuge from the burning rays of the sun, which was very fierce in that place. And the water hole, though small and muddy, was wet, in its own way. Here he settled down and got on as best he could.”

Many of us fill our lives with noise. We focus on a career. We focus on money. We focus on having as much control as we can so that others are powerless over us.

However, even when we create noise in our lives, we still know there is something more. We still have a longing and a desire for something that is bigger and brighter.

Brother Lawrence is a 17th century Carmelite monk who wrote about the liminal moments we have in the everyday parts of life. Liminal moments are those larger than life moments in which you feel and experience the presence of God. Of course, the most liminal moment in history was the birth and life of Jesus as God crossed the boundary to become human.

Psychologists call liminal space a place where boundaries dissolve. It is when we stand there on the threshold, getting ourselves ready to move across the limits of what we were into what we are to be. It is when we have a glimpse of eternity.

For me, these liminal moments can be triggered by the sound of music, or brought on by the sight of a sleeping baby or loved one. We each have had these liminal moments, and Brother Lawrence centered his life on these experiences. In his book “The Practice of the Presence of God”, Brother Lawrence wrote about his efforts to expand the frequency of these moments and the duration of these moments. Brother Lawrence tried to live his everyday life in a liminal space, where he was continuously experiencing the presence of God.

One of the theories that we have about Easter is that the resurrection of Jesus does something to that threshold we have between this world and the next. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus changed the universe forever. Two thousand years ago, when Jesus came back to life, it dissolved the barrier between us and God, facilitating the moments when we stand in the threshold and experience the liminal.

We each have experienced that desire for the liminal – for something more, and I am convinced that part of our human nature is the desire to be deeply connected to God, others and self. We were created by God to be in relationships. Spirituality is all about relationships. Spirituality is healthy loving relationships with God, others, self, and the rest of non-human creation. And, as I said, we each have an innate desire to be connected.

Desire is a word that we often associated with earthier things. We desire food. We desire a big house. We desire or lust after things.

And yes, that is one form of desire. But it is also much more, for “we ARE desire. It is the essence of the human soul, the secret of our existence. Absolutely nothing of human greatness is ever accomplished without it. Not a symphony has been written, a mountain climbed, an injustice fought, or a love sustained apart from desire. Desire fuels our search for the life we prize. Our desire, if we will listen to it, will save us from the sacrifice of our hearts on the altar of “getting by.” The same old thing is not enough. It never will be.”

Now, I know that things get in the way of our desires. Each and every one of us here today, struggles to answer the call of our desire. That is one of the beauties of walking though life with others. That is why we do church. We can help one another, and we can learn from one another. Together we can worship God, and we can practice our spirituality so that we can recognize and be aware of God’s eternal and unchanging love. There is nothing you can do to increase God’s love for you. And, there is nothing you can do to decrease God love for you. God just loves, and love, and loves.

“Henri Nouwen once asked Mother Teresa for spiritual direction. Spend one hour each day in adoration of Jesus, she said, and never do anything you know is wrong. Follow this, and you’ll be fine.

Such simple, yet profound advice. For you see worship is the act of the abandoned heart adoring its God. It is the union that we crave. Few of us experience anything like this on a regular basis, let alone an hour each day. But it is what we desperately need.

Simply showing up on Sunday is not even close to worship. Neither does singing songs with religious content pass for worship. What counts is the posture of the soul involved, the open heart pouring forth its love towards God and communing with Jesus. It is a question of desire.”

Now, one day “the sea lion had a dream... There were other nights in which he had dreamed of the sea. But those were long ago and nearly forgotten. Even still, the ocean that filled his dreams this night was so beautiful and clear, so vast and deep, it was as if he were seeing it for the first time. The sunlight glittered on its surface, and as he dived, the waters all around him shone like an emerald. If he swam quite deep, it turned to jade, cool and dark and mysterious. But he was never frightened; not at all. For I must tell you that in all his dreams of the sea, he had never before found

himself in the company of other sea lions. This night there were many, round about him, diving and turning, spinning and twirling. They were playing.

Oh, how he hated to wake from that wonderful dream. The tears running down his face were the first wet thing he had felt in a while. But he did not pause even to wipe them away; he did not pause, in fact, for anything at all. He set his face to the west, and he began to walk as best as a sea lion can.

"Where are you going?" he was asked.

"I am going to find the sea."

On this Easter Sunday, I invite you on a life long journey of desire as we walk together in our quest towards Jesus. As comfortable or familiar as it might be, know that the desert is not your home. Your home is in the sea that we know of as the kingdom of God on earth. And, know this as well. God already desires you.

Happy Easter! He is Risen!