

EASTER FIVE, YEAR A, MAY 7, 2023

I'm going to rattle off a number of famous people from sports heroes to singers to actors to supermodels that all had something in common from 1993 to 2005 other than being a celebrity. To name a few; Basketball star Patrick Ewing, Heavy weight champion Mohammed Ali, Soccer Star David Beckham, Football star Eli Manning, Tennis Stars Chris Evert and Andre Agassi. Olympic gold medalist Apollo Ono. Singers, Beyonce, LeAnn Rimes, Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Hudson. Super models Heidi Klum and Christie Brinkley. Director, Producer Ron Howard, and Spike Lee. Actors Danny DiVito, Hugh Jackman, Tom Cruise and David Hyde Pierce. Actresses Glenn Close, Susan Sarandon, Whoopi Goldberg, Jennifer Anniston, Lisa Kudrow, Mariska Hargitay, Angie Harmon. TV anchor Meredith Viera, even cartoon characters Garfield and the Simpsons and hundreds more. Do you know what they all had in common? They ALL had it! The milk mustache!

Do you remember the most iconic and one of America's most popular ad campaigns that all these celebrities appeared in showing of their white milk mustaches asking the simple question, "Got Milk?"

And the campaign significantly boosted milk sales and consumption by not only showing that cool people drink milk, but that milk does all sorts of good things for you. Milk can help you become a better athlete, grow taller, and provide you with proteins and vitamins that make you healthy, and give you strong bones, and even good hair! It was a great concept with a simple question – "Got Milk?"

And amazingly enough, this is not the first time that great question has been asked! Thirty or forty years after the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity had spread throughout Asia Minor. People found new life and hope in the Good News that God was in Christ reconciling the world to God. And they became Christians because they had found a living relationship with God and a better way to live. Living under the powerful shadow of Roman authority, they had discovered this alternative kingdom of God that Jesus taught - where people are loved for who they are, set free to become what God created them to be, and sent out into society to build a better world. They had a living faith that they practiced in their lives, their homes, their churches, and in their communities. But it was tough going.

Like all of us, the early Christians soon discovered that having faith in Jesus does not mean that the realities of life go away. We all have problems. Christians have dysfunctional families. We get cancer. We get angry at people, and even hate them. We get depressed, we have money problems, the list goes on and on.

So how do we keep going? How can we find our way? How do we know what to do and how do we really live a Christian life? Is there some sort of compass that can keep us pointed in the right direction? Well, this little letter from First Peter answers these questions by posing another. Would you believe the question is "Got Milk?"

Imagine that! Two thousand years before the milk people came up with their ad campaign, the author of First Peter put on a milk mustache and asked that very same question. "Got Milk?"

Well, not quite that way. What the author actually wrote is: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation..."

The way we Christians navigate through the difficult complexities of life is by nourishing ourselves on pure spiritual milk. This milk will help us become more spiritually active, taller in our faith, stronger in our endurance, and will enable us to find our way.

Generally speaking, there is nothing healthier for a baby than milk whether it's their own mother's milk or some other source of milk. In the same way, there is a pure spiritual milk that Christians need for both growth and guidance. This milk is the basic building block for faithful Christian living. With this pure spiritual milk energizing and guiding your life – you will find the power to make faithful decisions, and to know the difference between right and wrong, and to live as a faithful Christian.

Do you know what this milk is? Listen again to what was written: Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

The basic building block of the Christian life is that God is GOOD. God is GOOD! This is the pure spiritual milk of our faith. The most elementary guiding principle of Christian faith is the radical belief that God is good. This is the milk of our faith. This is what we need to drink!

Now that might seem extremely simplistic but the notion of God as good is essential to our faith since there is so much about God and Jesus that gets distorted. God is not a vengeful vindictive God that some people portray. God is all embracing, all loving, all inclusive, all compassionate. That is how we find our way by fully engaging this belief in the basic knowledge that God is good. That is why it is also important to recognize when passages of scripture get distorted and used to beat people over the head with their exclusive brand of Christianity. That is true of the passage in John today that says I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to God except through me. The last part of that sentence smacks of exclusivity and that is not what it means.

We need to look at it another way. For in another sense, 'believe in God, believe in me' is about each one of us, We carry with us the marks of our faith for others to see. When someone is aware of us as friend or colleague, then it is through us that the person views the Christian faith. We become the 'way' by which the Christian faith makes its claims. We become the 'truth' about the Christian life. We become the 'life' through which it is judged. We become the way others see that God is good.

The way of Christ is a way that leads us, deeper into the mystery of God. And on that way, we are not alone; there are those who journey with us into the depths of God's love that are not only Christians. The road to God is shared by many. When you look into the faces of those who give themselves to the goodness of God, you may well be looking into the face of a Jew, or a Muslim or a Buddhist. Each follows her or his own way. The way of love and compassion, the way of a heart open enough to embrace all people and care for the earth, the way that takes us into God's own being-this is a way known to countless people through countless ages.

"I am the way . . ." does not put us above other traditions. Jesus does not take us to a place that is superior to all others. Rather, Jesus takes us to a place that sinks beneath them all. He pulls us deeper and deeper into God.

This way of openness to God, this way of relationship with other people, this way of unconditional love is the way. Our Baptismal Covenant reminds us of that call to commitment. We are called to a commitment to respect the dignity of every human

being. Jesus describes it in John when he says, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly."

Our ministry as a church and as individual Christian people is to bring abundance to the lives of the people around us. Our job is to enhance peoples' lives, and to help them experience more and more fully the goodness of God!

As a church, this means we bring a godly respect to the people God leads us to and leads to us. This means we welcome everyone, including those we don't agree with, including those nobody else will accept. This means we do things as a church and as individuals that are designed to touch other's lives with the goodness of God, and to make their lives better. This means we plant love in the face of hatred, pardon in the face of injury, faith in the face of doubt, hope in the face of despair, light in the face of darkness, and joy in the face of sadness.

Remember God is good. Come and take your place in the ever unfolding story of God's action in the lives of the people of God and drink deeply of this spiritual milk. Look for the goodness of God everyday and you will find the spiritual milk to nourish you. Anyone Got Milk? Amen.