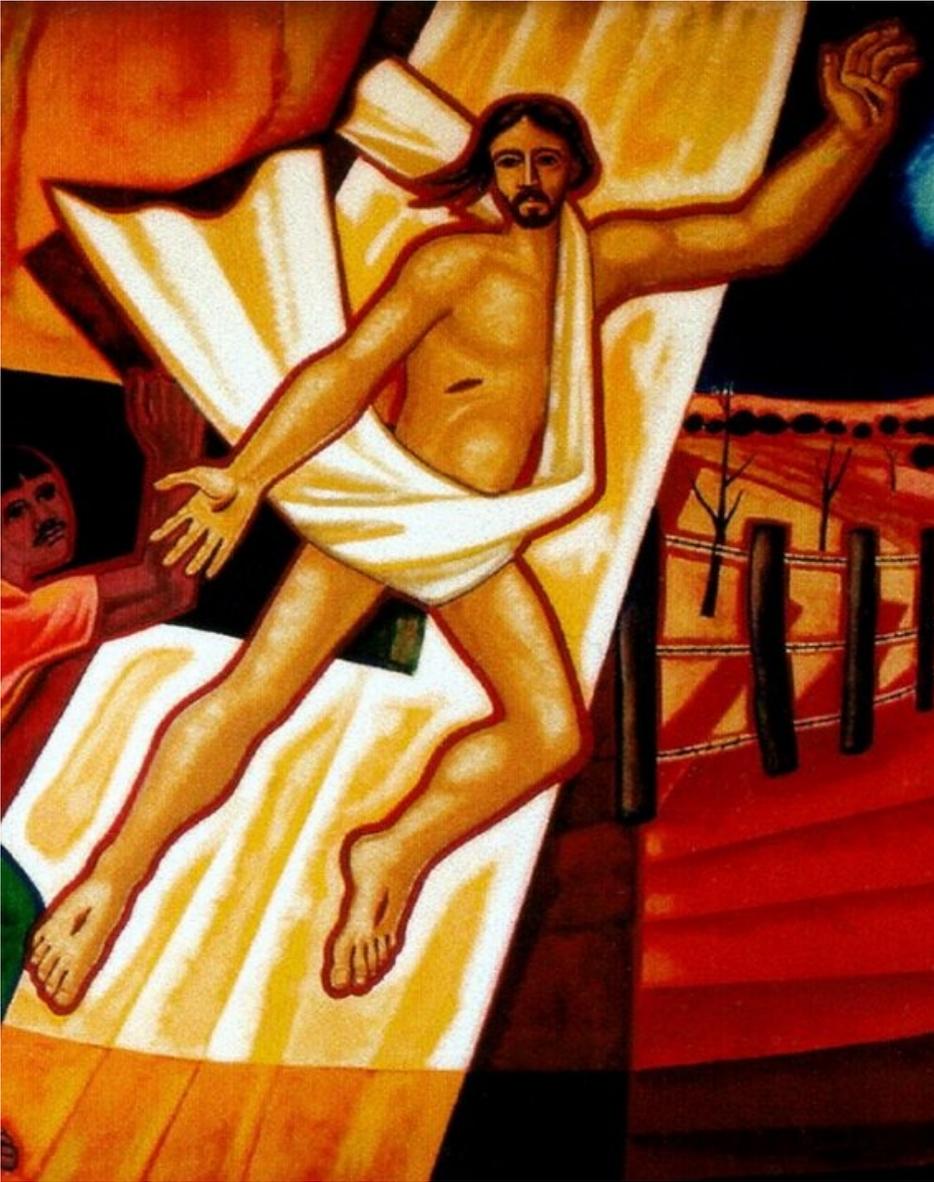


Homily for Easter Sunday



John 20:1-9

Two women stood before the 12th century Gothic cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. One asked, "Why can't we build structures like this anymore?" Her friend answered, "The people who built this had faith. Today we have opinions. You can't build a cathedral with opinions."

Once Jesus was arrested, the apostles except the teenage John remembered pressing appointments miles from the trouble scene. But the women followers of Jesus were cut from a different cloth. They dug in and held their ground. They would not desert their Man no matter what the cost.

Women and not men starred in the critical, early hours of Christianity. Their reward for heroism was demotion to a minor and non-priestly positions by men. Women got a raw deal. They ride in the back of the bus.

Friday found the women on Calvary. Christ's male followers were AWOL. The women were not intimidated by the Roman soldiers who had the death watch that afternoon. Though exhausted, the "weaker sex" busied themselves that evening preparing spices to anoint the body of their deceased

Leader. Their male counterparts were still MIA.

On the Sabbath, the women "rested, as the law commanded." (Luke) They were devout Jews. It would be sometime before the term Christian was coined to describe this movement. Early Sunday AM was their target date for anointing His corpse. As dawn broke, the women bolted out of their economy motel and made for the tomb. It was no contest. The young Mary of Magdala reached the tomb first.

That famous boulder had been rolled from the tomb's mouth. There is no way of telling whether Mary investigated the tomb interior. She did an about face. She raced for the fax machine to tell Peter the tomb had been disturbed.

Peter was convinced Mary Magdalen was hallucinating. But he angrily stepped into his sandals to check out the scene for himself. Young John came along to keep him company. John soon had the older man eating his dust. Ignoring his curiosity, John waited for the out-of-shape Peter to catch up. Despite his Friday flight, when he betrayed Christ and ran, Peter was still the CEO.

Peter put two and two together and brusquely told John, "Some ghouls have stolen Jesus' body."

But, although he kept quiet, the boy apostle did not accept Peter's conclusion. John's mental computer raised a horde of interesting questions. If this was the work of body snatchers, why would they have wasted the precious time needed to unwind the sheets? Why would they have risked a disease from handling the decomposing body? Furthermore, why would they have left the linen cloths behind? Material of the quality, provided by the wealthy Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea, would bring top dollars at the nearest flea market. One washing in detergent at the village laundromat and they could be sold as Irish linen. A bulb then flashed in the teenager's brain. Jesus had pulled their leg one more time. He had risen from the dead.

Nor was the symbolism of the cloths laying about lost on the boy. When Lazarus walked out of his tomb, he carried his winding cloths with him. He would need them for a second death. But not so Jesus! He would never die again.

The Feast of the Resurrection belongs to women and young people.

It was women who stood by Christ on Good Friday.

It was Mary of Magdala, just a slip of a girl, who was the first person to reach the tomb that first Easter AM. Her overpowering love, even for a deceased and vanquished Jesus, caused her to destroy all existing track records.

It was the gangly teen John who was the first one of record to realize that the foxy Master had risen. Remember all John had to go on was faith. He had not seen the resurrection. No one had. Like ourselves, he was peering through a glass darkly. Only his own glass was much more clouded and cracked than ours. Yet, that same faith changed the life of the women, that boy and the girl Mary.

The old life is comfortable. The new life is demanding. Yet the new life is rich and the old life is

barren.

The Resurrection of their Teacher was the beginning of a fresh life for women and the young John and Mary of Magdala. Why could it not be the same for us?

The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection. The Resurrection explains the Gospels. Belief in the Resurrection is not a footnote in the Christian faith; it is the Christian faith. Faith in His Resurrection teaches that the best is yet to come.

This Easter season live your life with that conviction.

Fr. James Gilhooley