

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Mar 31st 2013

We have been preparing for this Easter celebration with the prayer of Lent. We have been readying ourselves to welcome our newly-baptized members. We have been praying with the call back to our own baptismal innocence. We now pray forwardly; leaning towards the adventure of living Christ's life within us more publicly.

We pray to toss out the old "yeast" and allow God's "yeast of grace" to leaven our human dough and inspire us to rise to full stature as his body. We ask to be "untombed" ourselves from fear, self-negativity and agenda-driven convenience. If we do not rise then his rising remains merely His personal history. We can pray for the grace of making his rising our communal Good News!

REFLECTION

It has snowed/rained in our part of the world which is bringing, hopefully, the grass back from winter's death-grip. This morning the sun's warmth seemed to dust off a light-white covering from our little lawn and I heard it say, "Now there, forget what winter has done. There is life again and I offer it to you and help you see it."

Three months ago, just before Christmas, the sun began its return toward our half of the globe. The ancient celebrations of its return proclaimed hope, fruitfulness and life. We have Easter symbols of little chickens scratching their way out of eggshells. We have little baby rabbits hopping playfully around young children. We have Easter flowers to sing the ancient hymn which I heard on our front lawn this morning. The sun rose and by its light we see all things anew. Death has been conquered and life belongs again to the living.

The Son of God rises and like the sun of the heavens, he springs into life and, untombed himself, he says, "Death is no more the ultimate human experience. The soul's winter is past. Come out and enjoy the Son's shining warmth."

We will be listening these next two months of the adventures of the early Church from the Acts of the Apostles. First, we hear from Peter who has been summoned from Jaffa to Caesarea by a centurion by the name of Cornelius who had a vision during his prayer. He was advised to fetch Peter who would enlighten him. What we hear is Peter's little summary of Jesus' call, life's labors and how he was killed. He then relates how Jesus had been seen by believers and how faith in him continues Jesus' ministry of healing. The result of Peter's interpretation and then the proclamation of Who Jesus is and what he did moves Cornelius and his fellow listeners to be baptized.

The Gospel opens with the darkness just before dawn. This again is an artistic form for the writer of this account; good things happen in the light and bad things occur in the dark. Something really good is about to happen, but not quite just yet. Mary Magdala comes to the tomb while still in the dark about Jesus' having risen, but it is not night; the dawning of the light is very near. She notices the stone

having been rolled aside, but she is still in the dark about its true meaning.

Mary informs Peter and the “disciple whom Jesus loved” of her experience and so, they run back with differing times in arrival. They are moving slowly into something dawning on them. Jesus is not there, but having some little evidence, they believe what they see and begin living what they believe. This is exactly how history began becoming news, Good News. These two runners did not just sit down and try to figure this whole thing out. They remembered, they believed and they left Jesus’ tomb and began his resurrection in them.

We may be in the dark about how the Resurrection took place. We can intellectually stay in the tomb of our prideful minds until some light turns us on. The early believers saw what they saw and believed what they could not see. They began making news by their living in the light, in the day of hope. Seeing, having to see, demanding to see lead ultimately to frustration and back into the dark.

Dawn is such a wonderful Easter symbol. Many Christians celebrate Easter by attending “Sunrise Services”. At dawn though, which is the time in which we actually live, things are just coming into view. Peter and the other disciple saw, but it was the dawning of the dawn, not the noon of eternal clarity. I assume folks who wake up early to catch and celebrate the Easter sunrise, feel cheated or sad when clouds dim the sun’s light and warmth. The news from the early Church was and is that we have just the exact right amount to see and still believe. Having to see signs, evidence, written reports and such is a form of blindness; blinded by what we see or have to see.

We who believe are untombed to make news by how we live with what we have seen and not seen. The good news is that we have newly baptized members in our midst. The good news is that we believe the Good News that Jesus has risen and so have we. We have risen above the natural earthly demand for more light. I still hear this morning’s hymn on our lawn, “Winter’s grip has ended; look around and see what you see and believe.” Thank God, the two runners did not stay until they figured it all out. We would all still be in the dark.

“He fathers forth whose beauty is past change. Praise Him.” G. M. Hopkins, S.J.

Larry Gillick, S.J.