

Easter Sunday

By: Rev. Christopher Weekly S.J.

Easter Sunday is not only the greatest festival day of the church year, it is also the only one that is determined by the phases of the moon. As pagan as that may sound, it reflects the ancient connection of our incarnational faith with the natural rhythms of times and season. For you Church trivia buffs: Easter always falls on the first Sunday... after the first full moon, following the Spring Equinox. In our northern hemisphere, Easter coincides with the greening of the earth after the dull gray weeks of winter. This connection of Springtime and Easter is a happy one, and reminds us of God's power to renew the earth, and renew our own lives.

But linking Spring with the great paschal feast can also be misleading, because Spring – and its rhythms – is entirely natural. Buy a daffodil bulb in the late fall and you know that though that brown lump bears no resemblance to the yellow trumpet it shall become – this transformation is still entirely in the natural order of things.

Resurrection, on the other hand, is unnatural.

When we bury a loved one in the earth, that is the end of things (so to speak). We do not wait around and wait for that person to reappear in a few months, not this side of the grave anyway. We pray our respects... we grieve.... And we go on with life as best as we can.

This is what Mary Magdalene, Salome and the mother of James were doing very early on that morning – paying their respects – bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus so that after his brutal death, he might at least rest in a dignified peace. And yet, as they approached, even at some distance to the tomb they knew that something was wrong. Someone had already rolled the stone away.

Their feeling must have been something along the lines of “O my God!” “Now what has happened?” has someone disrespected the dead by stealing his body... pillaging his tomb!? And imagine their shock when upon peering into this tomb they notice a young man clothed in a white garment – A messenger who tells them not to be amazed but tells them – in their moment of shock – that he has gone ahead of them, to Galilee, where they will be able to see him. This account of the resurrection in Mark's gospel actually goes on one more verse, to report that even after hearing this messenger's news to them they “fled from the tomb in terror and amazement, and – because they were afraid – they said nothing to anyone.” Of course the women are jangled with fear... they are in shock: it is unimaginable that someone should rise from the dead! It is not in the natural order of things!

And yet... within a very short period of time (as our reading from Acts indicates) Peter and the women and men who had followed Jesus have encountered their friend risen, have “ate and drank with him” and received his commission to preach the forgiveness of sins, and testify to the new life they experience in following the risen Christ. Fear very quickly gives way to the joy-filled lived reality that Christ is alive.

Friends, the fifty days of the Easter season that remain ahead of us will unfold in story after story the many encounters the first disciples had of the risen Jesus..., encounters they could only have when they stop looking for him among the dead! And all these encounters will conform to the pattern we hear this morning, a pattern we are invited to recognize in our own lives: Someone will amaze us with news that shocks us out of our old ways of thinking and acting, and prods us to look for God “out there” in places we never imagined before. Perhaps we have hurt or betrayed someone, violated their trust, and that person extends to us the unexpected gift of forgiveness. Or perhaps we watch while a friend or loved one is dying... and witness how fear and sorrow melt away as the family surrounds her with love and faith as she goes into the arms of God.

All such unexpected, unforeseen... un-natural responses to the death-dealing aspects of our lives are the tracings of Christ's resurrection in the lives of those who trust God. Our challenge this Easter Day... and every day, is like that posed to Mary Magdalene, Salome, and the mother of James: We must be willing to walk away from the empty tombs of our lives, walk away from the places of death in our lives and believe that we shall see Christ out there ahead of us, among the living!

If we hold tight to the “old yeast” of resentments and grudges, if we fixate on the diseases and tragedies, the crosses that come our way, then life will too often feel like a cold and damp tomb. Death is natural... loss is natural... grief is natural. But God has rolled those heavy stones to the sides this happy morning to reveal a highly unnatural truth:

The truth that God has planted a seed of life in us that can never be killed, and that if we stir ourselves to walk the new roads before us, then, like Peter and disciples, there is so much we can do: We too will be able to give witness to the power of forgiveness, we will leave our fears in the past and find courage, courage to testify to those stuck in the tombs of their lives that there is a healing power in the risen Christ for all the living, and for all the dead.

So friends, let us all rejoice today in the words of the Easter messenger: “He has been raised, and is ‘out there’ on the road” ahead of us. We have only to leave the graveyards of our lives,

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 10:34-43 1 Corinthians 5:60-8 John 20:1-9

April 5, 2015

靈 修 生 活

希 望

大 輝

不知從何時起，生命中就出現了一種莫名的呼喚，泛起了自己很多的憧憬、祈盼和理想，使我追逐着一個又一個的希望，就這樣踏出了我成長的路。

小時候我已適應了父母的「獎勵」教育：做好功課有故事聽，幫忙清潔有蘋果吃，只要實現擺下來的條件，就能「得償所願」，因為父母總是言出必行的，但久而久之總感到所願的是現實條件的一種「應份」；但有一件事使我改變了看法。

父親很早就教會我下棋，後來才知道他棋癮很大，只是棋術不高，往往也給我贏過他。有一次我們下棋時，聽到電台播出一支悅耳、輕快的旋律。我問他這是什麼樂器，他說是口琴。我馬上應了一句：「我很想有一個口琴。」過了三個月我什麼都忘了。就在我生日那天放學回家，父親因公幹外出已有幾天了，只有媽媽等着我，將一隻很精美嶄新的口琴拿出來，說是爸爸送給我的……我深深感受到父親不但言出必行，且還令人「喜出望外」。

這口琴陪伴了我的童年，迴響着我心靈一個又一個的希望。然而隨着每個希望的滿全或落空，不其然在我生命裏就交織著一串串起伏的感受；但當我意識愈加強時，也愈發覺這些感受都是有待滿全的含糊反應。「滿全」的高興不一定是「得償所願」的自足，因為它往往又帶來另一個急不及待的祈盼，而「落空」氣餒竟又是「喜出望外」的前奏。

正如哲人康德探討人生時所問：「吾人究竟能希望些什麼呢？」我發覺一個故事、一個蘋果、一場電影、一次遠足、一襲微笑，一聲讚許……都曾經是我所希望的。但隨着生命的每一步，這一切都過去，而迎上來的卻是一個不能避免的終結，愈接近它，就愈多一分枯竭。它就像墓石一般緊密地堵住了一切視線。縱使人的希望企圖滾開這塊大石，但終究不能如願；況且在墓石之後的一片漆黑，人又能夠希望甚麼？還是一個故事？除非……

除非是那隻尚未完的故事：

「一週的第一天，大清早，瑪利亞瑪達肋納、雅各伯的母親瑪利亞和撒羅默買了香料，要去傅抹耶穌；那時太陽剛升起，她們彼此說：誰給我們從墳墓門口滾開那塊石頭？但舉目一望看見那塊很大的石頭已經滾開了……。」（谷十六 1-4…）

這只是一個「喜出望外」的開始，因為那「言出必行」的天父已復活了那被釘的納匝人耶穌，立為主，立為默西亞了（宗二 36），並藉着祂由死者中復活，重生了我們，為獲得那充滿生命的希望（伯前一 3）。

這位納匝人雖被那不能避免的終結所吞噬，卻開始了一個尚未完的故事 --- 一個新的歷史，新的紀元，因為祂替我們滾開了那移不動的墓石，向我們迎上來，呼喚着每一個人將希望建基於祂的復活；只有這樣，人的希望才可以躍出那有限的地平綫，投向那無涯的慈愛中。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 五 年 四 月 五 日

宗 10:34-43; 格前 5:6-8; 若 20:1-9