

Easter Sunday

4.12.20

Acts 10:34, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4;

John 20:1-9

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST IS YOURS ... NOW, PAY IT FORWARD

Recently I stopped at a little corner convenience store and was surprised that they had in stock 4-roll packages of toilet paper. I grabbed two packages but at the check stand I was told there was a limit of one package per person.



An unknown customer at another cash register overheard and asked: "Can I have that?" and she bought the second package. When I got outside the store she was waiting for me and handed me the second package of toilet paper. I was startled and she told me that she had bought it for me. I reached for my wallet to reimburse her and she waved me off and smiled and said: *"Just pay it forward."*

In our Gospel reading Mary Magdalene discovers that someone has broken into the tomb of Jesus under the cover of night and taken his body. We might wonder why? There was nothing of value in that grave, just a bruised and bloodied corpse. Anything of value and even his

clothing had been taken by the Roman soldiers who had cast lots for it. Yet someone seemingly had desecrated the grave of Jesus and so Mary runs to tell Peter and the other disciples.



They come at a run and discover the burial cloths, but no body. The passage says that the beloved disciple saw and believed. But what did he believe? The very next verse says that they did not yet understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead.

A common thread throughout Jesus' ministry on earth is the disciples trying to cast him into the role of messiah as they understood it rather than learning from Jesus what his being the messiah really means. Jesus took on our human condition so that we could finally begin to understand what God is truly like. The Bible teaches that we human beings are created in the image and likeness of God yet we see throughout the Old Testament how we keep trying to recreate God into our image by making God jealous, vengeful and angry and resentful. Jesus became one of us to show us how to grow in our very humanity to be more like God: rich in kindness, forgiveness, mercy and love.

Sometimes a butterfly is used as an image of the resurrection since it emerges from what seems like its death in its cocoon to a new and different life. The moth or butterfly which emerges from the cocoon bears little resemblance to the caterpillar that had entered into it. After his

resurrection Jesus was often not immediately recognized by people who knew and loved him, even though his hands and feet and side still bore the wounds of his crucifixion. Whoever we will become or whatever we will look like in the resurrection, there will be some direct connection to the people we were while we are alive here on this earth, but we will be also changed and different. Saint Paul wrote that our lives are hidden with Christ in God. Perhaps that is saying that we just cannot imagine what our life in heaven will be like. It is beyond our thinking and imagining.

The burial cloths left behind in the tomb suggest that Jesus has clothed himself with something else; clothed himself with glory.



Jesus came to eliminate the disconnection between God and humanity which had existed since the sin of Adam and Eve. Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose again so that we could come to know and love the God who wants to be known by us and who loves us without limit. There is no disconnection between the resurrection of Jesus and the life he lived: one flows directly out of the other. He came to show us how to live our lives so that they will also flow directly into the resurrection and eternal life with God.

We see a profound change in Jesus' disciples after the resurrection, after they finally understood that Jesus had to die so as to rise again. They were transformed from a group of terrified individuals who had

abandoned Jesus and fled from the authorities into a group of disciples who were united in their conviction and courage and willingness to die in Jesus' name and to spread his message. From frail, weak friends they were fashioned into the Body of Christ. With the resurrection, the disciples learned not to look for the corpse of Jesus but to seek and find him in the Eucharist, in the living, breathing body of Christ. They came to understand that Jesus was not completely gone and removed from their lives. He remains with them and with us. Jesus Christ is risen. He remains with us and continues to intercede for us.



Yet, as Saint Theresa of Avila said:
*"Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which
he looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet
with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands
through which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*



We are his voice. With God's grace may we come to really believe in the resurrection and as the Body of Christ profess it with our lives, by our words and actions, not seeking to somehow reimburse God but paying it forward by sharing our faith and God's love. May we receive forgiveness of our sins in his name and become ever more strongly connected to God so that when Christ our life appears, we too will appear with him in glory. Alleluia. May God be blessed.

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