

Easter Sunday

Cycle B, 4.4.21

Acts 10:34, 37-43/

Colossians 3:1-4/John 20:1-9

WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING; LIFE WON IN CHRIST IS

It's good to be together for this Easter Festival, to come to the touchstone of our faith and to renew our commitment to live the gospel, especially in these trying times. We need one another and it's so good to see many of you in person after this long year. How many of you have ever entered a running race? 5-K? 10-K? Marathon? There are so many races in the Bay area – Bay to Breakers, the Lafayette Run for the Reservoir, CYO track and field events. When I was living in Colorado some thirty plus years ago, much younger and spry and naïve, some friends from our aerobics class talked me into running a half-Marathon in the mountain towns outside Denver, from Georgetown to Idaho Springs.



With hundreds of other runners we parked our car and walked toward the starting line. The air was crisp, the mountain scenery was glorious and spirits were high with anticipation. We overheard a runner nearby, who already started his warm-up jog, say to his partner: *“I dunno if I’m gonna make it to the end; I may need a priest halfway through this race.”* My friends just looked at one another and smiled. Little did

I realize that I would be the one who nearly needed a priest at mile twelve when I thought my last breath was just that. I did cross the finish line and victoriously took my free bagel, yogurt and T-shirt, informing my friends that some experiences should stay as a once-in-a-lifetime memory. The following year, I weakened... and we did it again.



I hope you noticed the foot race that took place in the resurrection gospel we just heard. Mary came to the tomb where Jesus was buried and found it empty. In a panic, she ran to Simon Peter. Never one to listen to a woman or even at times to Jesus, Peter and the other disciple have a foot race to the tomb to see for themselves. The other disciple ran faster than Peter and got to the tomb first. He won the race. But, did you notice? He didn't go in first; he stepped aside and let Peter be the first to go in.

That little, almost insignificant detail of this touching gospel story, says something very important about what it means to be a Christian, to be a follower of the Risen Lord. So many times in life, being

first means being the best: winning a gold medal at the Olympics, winning the blue ribbon in 4-H competition, getting the top marks and earning that scholarship. While silver medal holders should feel proud, few of us ever want to finish a race or anything else in second place. We want to be number one. My trusted political commentator, Fareed Zacharia on CNN this morning, called it “American exceptionalism” – the audacity to think we’re better than everyone else. But the Easter Gospel teaches us another way to be. Even though the other disciple, referred to as “the one Jesus loved,” reached the tomb first, he slowed down and gave Peter the honor of being the first to enter. Like the other disciple, there are times when we realize that winning isn’t everything. Our own individual prayer or accomplishments are less important than building up others. We need to look out for one another. We are all members of the Body of Christ and we’re called to love and respect each member of Christ’s Body.



That was perhaps the most important lesson Jesus taught his disciples and us. At the last supper, on the night before he died, Jesus got down on his hands and knees and washed the feet of his disciples – a humble

act that only a servant would do. Afterwards he said to his friends: *“Do you realize what I just did for you? You call me “Master” and “Teacher”—and you’re right; that’s who I am. But if I, your Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you have to do the same for one another. I gave you an example, now follow it.”* Jesus calls us to bend low in serving one another.



For as difficult as the past year has been with its challenges and frustrations, there have been so many examples of those who have put the needs of others before their own. The obvious heroes world-wide have been the doctors, nurses and health care professionals, the lab technicians who have sacrificed their time and their family life working long hours day and night for the welfare of patients afflicted by the coronavirus. The not-so-obvious heroes are those whose jobs have allowed the rest of us to stay safe – delivery people, grocery store workers, cooks at take-out restaurants, many immigrant workers whose low-paying jobs allowed societal functions to continue. In his inspirational and insightful recent book, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, Pope Francis reminds us of our fundamental Christian vocation when he writes: *To dream of a different future we need to choose fraternity over individualism as our organizing principal. Fraternity, the sense of*

belonging to each other and to the whole of humanity, is the capacity to come together and work together against a shared horizon of possibility.



Jesus, the Risen Lord, opens for us that possibility of a new world. We follow his law, but it's the law of love. We belong to his Kingdom, but it's a Kingdom without borders and its citizens are all who put their faith and trust in God. We give him our allegiance, but we give it freely because we receive so much in return. He gives us strength and power, but as means of forgiveness and peace. How can you and I keep in our hearts that attitude of humble reverence toward one another and generous service to our world? You're doing it right now, through hearing God's Word in the scriptures, by becoming one with Christ in the Eucharist we'll share, by joining together in this Mass that joins us to one another and to the universal Church. So let the grace of Easter transform your hearts and your homes. In a world of violence, of prejudice, of indifference, let your faith show others that the humble path of Jesus is the winning road to travel. Christ has won the race; now we can share in his victory. Christ is risen from the tomb; now we can live a new life in Him.

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