



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Easter | April 15, 2018

Putting Our Fears to Rest

By Mary Katharine Deeley

During a particularly difficult period at one place I worked, I would come home at night and rehash conversations and events, wondering whether the outcome would have been different if I'd said or done something else.

I wonder whether the apostles asked themselves the same kinds of questions after the crucifixion. "Should we have done something differently? Could we have prevented this somehow?" Perhaps they locked the door because they were afraid they'd be put to death too.

When we're in a bad situation, sometimes all we want to do is hide. It's a child's response: If I don't look at it, maybe it will go away. But the locked door was no barrier, and Jesus came and stood in their midst. Rather than ridicule their fear, he gently put it to rest: "Peace be with you." The more Jesus talked, the more they heard, and they came to know that the peace of the Lord is not like the world's peace.

It's not a temporary measure that will only give way to more turmoil. Jesus calmly and lovingly put their fears to rest. It wasn't that the world was suddenly going to be welcoming; rather, they would be confident in the new life that was in them and in the grace Christ alone can give.

Jesus does this for us as well. He walks through the locked doors of our hearts and blesses us with peace. The more we listen to Jesus' words, the more we can understand and witness to his truth.

Is the Lord with you today? +

Sunday Readings

Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead;

1 Jn 2:1-5a

He is expiation for our sins, and ... for those of the whole world.

Lk 24:35-48

[Jesus said,] "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead."

A Word From Pope Francis

Jesus tells us that the path to encountering him is to find his wounds. We find Jesus' wounds in carrying out works of mercy, giving to ... the body of your wounded brother, because he is hungry ... because he is incarcerated, because he is in the hospital. These are the wounds of Jesus today.

—Homily, feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, July 3, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Is there an area of my heart and life where I need Jesus' healing?
- Am I confident in God's power to raise me up out of my weakness?



Transformed by Easter

By Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

Christian history reaches its crescendo in the resurrection. The risen Jesus is the final revelation of the heart of God—a God who teaches love rather than hate, forgiveness rather than blame, nonviolence rather than violence.

Recall Jesus' encounters with his disciples after his resurrection. He came to his followers with whom he had spent three years, the people closest to him who had nevertheless rejected, betrayed, and abandoned him. Following his resurrection Jesus had the opportunity to chastise them. And yet, in all four Gospel accounts we see that the risen Jesus neither berates nor blames his disciples. Indeed, Peter, who had betrayed him three times, is given three chances to say "I love you" to his master.

There is nothing to fear in the risen Christ. We have in him the perfect icon of a God who is safe. We have a God who does not blame, punish, threaten, or dominate. We have a God who breathes forgiveness. The entire biblical tradition has been moving to this moment where God is identified with universal forgiveness.

Jesus' resurrection tells us that there is no victory through domination. There is no such thing as triumph by force. By his life, death, and resurrection Jesus stops the cycle of violence, challenging the notion of dominating power. He invites

us to relational or spiritual power, where we are not just changed but transformed.

Redemptive Forgiveness

Many of us identify more easily with the judging God we may have encountered in childhood: the one who knows our every sin and metes out punishments, the one we must attempt to placate and please. Often, we are more comfortable living with a fearsome God than one whose love is boundless. But by his life, death, and resurrection Jesus challenges us to new heights of redemptive forgiveness.

Most of us cannot go for long without thinking a judgmental or accusatory thought about others. So often, there is someone we're judging, accusing, blaming. To live in the good, to live in the love, to live without a need to judge—that's major surgery! None of us reaches that point early in life, but when we're there we know we're transformed. We're free. We are at one with the risen Jesus.

Once we have a personal experience in our own life of the risen Christ upholding, loving, and freeing us, then we have nothing to fear. That's how secure Christ makes us, because we have a center point. We have received the gift of the Spirit.

Divine Lure

During a retreat, my fellow retreatants

and I were asked to list the adjectives each of us would use to describe Jesus. My list included words such as compassionate, self-confident, humble, forgiving. When our leader brought us back together as a group she suggested that the qualities we had identified represented not so much what Jesus was like, but what each of us wanted in ourselves. Jesus is the divine lure who invites us forward in our humanity, enticing us into these virtues by his own full living of them. The qualities I had on my list are indeed qualities Jesus possessed. But the reason we want to embrace them is because Jesus has set the standard, the ideal for humanity.

In Jesus we see the divine being who is also the perfect human being. Jesus comes in human form to show us the face of God, who is eternally compassionate and joyous, standing with us in our sufferings and joys. As Christians, our vocation is to unite with Christ crucified and risen. +

PRAYER

Risen Lord, your resurrection revealed to the world the hope and promise of new life. Help me to be a faithful, hopeful, loving presence to all people.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 16–21, 2018

Monday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 6:8–15 / Jn 6:22–29

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 7:51–8:1a / Jn 6:30–35

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:1b–8 / Jn 6:35–40

Thursday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 8:26–40 / Jn 6:44–51

Friday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:1–20 / Jn 6:52–59

Saturday, Easter Weekday:
Acts 9:31–42 / Jn 6:60–69