



EASTER SUNDAY 2006

Acts 10: 34-43 1 Cor 5: 6-8 John 20: 1-9

Greetings to the church of God which is scattered throughout the world; to you who have been consecrated in Christ Jesus and called to be a holy people, grace and peace.

This is a form of greeting that Paul used when writing to the early Christian communities. On this our most important feast day it is good to be connected to the people who were our ancestors in the faith.

Today we celebrate the mystery of Resurrection- a mystery in the sense that the transformation of Jesus and our on-going transformation is beyond our ability to express in words. We have to resort to metaphors, and even then no one metaphor can capture the reality of risen life.

The scriptures of the New Testament express, in a variety of ways, what the various communities struggled to articulate. The Gospel reading is from John. It places the principal characters of his Gospel in a simple narrative.

“Early in the morning, on the first day of the week, while there was yet no light...”

Compare this to-

“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.” Genesis 1.

Everyone knows what comes next in the story.

“Then God said, Let there be Light.”

Easter is the feast of Light.

The vigil begins with the lighting of the new fire. John, by beginning his gospel the way he did, was reminding his community about creation. He is saying to the people, *“Think back to the beginning, God is the author of this mystery that is creation, so too God is the author of this new creation.”*

Resurrection is the response by humankind to the command of God for the light to go on. It’s not easy to grasp this and so we have Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and the beloved disciple reacting in different ways.

Mary seeks the dead Jesus for a last farewell gesture.

Peter sees with his eyes that the shroud is abandoned but has no answer to the mystery.

The beloved sees and believes. We're not told what this disciple believes, but whatever it was it doesn't seem to have had a strong effect. Mary, by staying and continuing her search, becomes the herald of resurrection to the community.

Sometimes we come to an understanding quickly but more often than not it is a slow process. The evangelists show us, that so it was for the early community. It was only through reflection and sharing their experiences with one another that they could finally proclaim, "He is risen!"

From the structure of the Gospels, scholars recognise that some editing took place. For example in John, the original story ended with 20: 30. It seems that the communities were concerned that Resurrection might be seen as a sort of "show" miracle, that is, that, like Peter's mistake in the transfiguration story, we might see it as an end in itself. ("Let us build tents")

The early communities recognised that the call of Jesus was not about the worship of Jesus but about mission. Every account of the Resurrection needs to be followed by the call to build the kingdom.

This is not about numbers in churches but about being other Christs.

Jesus goes before us as the model of discipleship.

As he did, so we must do.

That is why the small fragment from 1 Corinthians is so important.

Recognising that Jesus is risen and in him we share the resurrected life could be cause for boasting or, worse, sterile devotion. Yeast is potent; it can move a large mass of flour. But yeast is a living thing and it can die. If the yeast is useless, get rid of it. Start again with fresh yeast or make unleavened bread.

Let the sight of fresh rounded loaves remind us of our commitment to be bringers of light, healing, and nourishment to our world.

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