

Easter Sunday – April 1, 2018 – Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Peter proceeded to speak and said: "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name.

Psalm: Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

R. (24) This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.
Let the house of Israel say,
"His mercy endures forever."

"The right hand of the LORD has struck with
power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.
I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above,

not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.

Or

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Gospel: John 20:1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Night's dark soul awakens. Tiny chirps of life tug at its ear. Just the smallest candlefull of light peeks through its shadows. Dawn tiptoes in. This is the balance-point of all time. Easter. Friday tempted us to guilt—about his wounds, thinking that our sins caused them. About his arms, still marked with shrill hurts. And maybe that is why he can hold us, enfold us so well. Maybe the wounds know somehow the shape of our small selves. Mothering Christ. The cantor at Easter Vigil sings these words:

“O certe necessarium Adae peccatum quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem! Oh truly necessary sin of Adam, blotted out by the death of Christ! O blessed fault, which has merited such a Redeemer, so great a Redeemer.”

Isn't the cantor singing in praise of the sin of Adam and Eve? “O blessed fault”? Christ's death has taken their sin away. Is it right to rejoice about sin being “necessary”? Original sin does not really seem like a good or blessed event. Nor our selfish penchant for misdeed. Yet it is true. Without such a sin, such a Savior would never have had reason to come. Now Christ's wounded arms can sweep us up, comfort and absolve and hold us. We are blessed beyond words. Sins always carry in their revolt the pledge of forgiveness. Night always carries in its midst the promise of light. *“O vere beata nox, in qua terrenis caelestia, humanis divina iunguntur! O truly blessed night, in whom earth is wedded to heaven, and humans to God!”*

Several rows of the people have their candles lit. Over there, a lot more. Soon half the church awakens to Christ's gentle light. And, quickly, the rest. Morning has eased their faces into daylight, into the soft, humble glow. Jesus became the night. Jesus is the light. We can see him for who he has been all along. The Christ of God. The essence of love. The modest flame who softly lights the world.

Latin text is from the *Exultet*, an ancient chant sung during the Easter Vigil. It is traditionally performed by the deacon after the Paschal candle has been lit and the clergy have processed to the altar.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Should we witness with more than words? Peter bore witness in a different manner after the Resurrection than he did before Christ died. To what do you attribute this? Was he consumed by love for Christ and his Gospel? Is the source of strength for Peter the same source for us?
2. “Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above.” (See later in Colossians 3 for Paul's meaning of “above”). He says that we should put on heartfelt compassion. What does compassion look like in our immediate world and in the larger one? Discuss Pope Francis' statement: “We incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor when we are deeply moved by the suffering of others.” ([The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium](#), #193)?
3. What is it that allowed John to “see and believe,” to have this kind of clarity? Does love give you knowledge about a person, or insights into their behavior? In John, Jesus said “Whoever loves me ... I will love him (her) and reveal myself to him (her)” (Jn 14:21). Is there a connection between Jesus' statement and John's “seeing and believing”?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who on this day, through your Only Begotten Son, have conquered death and unlocked for us the path to eternity, grant, we pray, that we who keep the solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection may, through the renewal brought by your Spirit, rise up in the light of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.