

Easter Sunday
April 24, 2011

It is amazing to me how a familiar story takes on new meaning as we hear the story time and time again. Such is the case for me this weekend as we read St. John's account of the resurrection of Jesus. I begin to realize what the resurrection prompts people to do. It makes them run.

No sooner had Mary Magdalen come to the tomb and saw that the stone had been moved away that she ran off to Simon Peter and the other disciples. Peter and the other disciples, we are told, were "running side by side" and even one disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. After allowing Peter to enter the tomb, the disciple who had outran Peter went into the tomb. We are told, "He saw and believed."

I am curious why the Gospel writer emphasizes that once people began to realize what had taken place, they had no choice but to run. Running implies an urgency and excitement, a commitment of energy to arrive sooner at our destination. And as I reflect on what took place centuries ago on that first Easter morning, I begin to recognize the challenge offered to us in today's world.

St. Paul uses the image of the runner to describe the course of human life. We are told to keep our eyes fixed on the finish line. There is no doubt that running requires endurance, strength, commitment. It is an exercise we cannot do just once in a while, but it calls for an ongoing commitment. Easter is the time to renew the commitment in all our lives to run to the tomb, to peer in as the disciples did, and to discover the great paradox of Christian faith. An empty tomb announces the presence of the Risen Christ.

It's hard for us to run to the tomb today. If you are anything like me, it's so easy to be weighed down by our own agenda, our own issues, our own concerns. I know I am supposed to keep my eyes fixed on the finish line, but there are so many distractions. At times, it is so much easier to stop, to take another route, to explore other options.

Yet, the challenge remains as we confront the mystery of Easter. We do not run alone. Rather, we run with others who share the same dream, who recognize the mystery, who are caught up in the excitement of discovering the meaning of human existence. We are part of a race where everyone wins because the resurrection is the triumph of grace over sin, life over death.

There's no doubt that we need to proclaim the message of the resurrection with greater urgency today than ever before. It is not enough just to announce the new life which Jesus brings at Easter, but to find ways in which to share that life. We rejoice with the children who became members of our faith community this Easter and join with us and their parents and godparents in the race to the tomb. We must continue to invite others to do the same, while looking for ways to renew our own commitment as people of faith.

Easter hope challenges us to build up our community of faith in downtown Seattle, to recognize our vocation through baptism to minister to one another. Easter hope must speak to families who are troubled, to the young who are searching for meaning, to the elderly who could lose hope so easily. Easter hope announces the goodness of the human person, the value of commitment, and the real meaning of life and death. Despite the challenges present in the church today there is new hope and life which the resurrection affirms each year at Easter.

Easter hope must also touch the world in which we live. Easter hope must address the poverty, the homelessness, the hunger, the injustice which we could well take for granted. Easter hope is not reserved to the sanctuary. It must explode into the world in which we live.

Easter is the invitation once again to join the race. The race begins and ends at a tomb outside the city of Jerusalem when new life explodes in the silence of an early morning. It is this explosion of life which gives all our lives new meaning and purpose. May we also have the faith to see and believe. A very blessed Easter to all and may God's grace and peace be yours.

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