

Second Sunday of Easter

April 6, 2013

We gather as a community of believers to worship God. We recognize God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who raised him from the dead. The church considers the Easter season as one day in the celebration of Easter. Easter speaks to the darkness of death. Indeed, in the Gospel of John, Easter begins in darkness. Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb “while it was still dark.” Many of the other Easter stories begin in darkness of one sort or another. There is the darkness of fear spoken of in this morning’s Gospel, with the disciples gathered behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. There is the darkness of doubt that leads Thomas to say, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” The two disciples walking down the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus find themselves enveloped in the darkness of hopelessness, their hope that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel having been shattered. The movement in all the Easter stories is from darkness to light, from death to new life, from doubt to hope, from fear to peace. This movement is the movement of faith.

The author of Revelation addressed his hearers as one who “share with you the distress, the kingdom, and the endurance we have in Jesus.” Through his words, we hear the risen One speak to our hearts and minds: “Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I hold the keys to death and the netherworld.”

I came across a poetic definition of faith the other day on Busted Halo: “Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings while the dawn is still dark.” Easter faith calls us to sing Alleluia in the face of darkness. The paschal candle remains lit for fifty days, reminding us of the light that has come into the world with the resurrection of Christ. Faith allows us to see in this candle the sign that darkness will not conquer. Faith gives us Easter eyes.

Thomas is presented today as a figure who moves from doubt to faith. We often call him Doubting Thomas, but that imprisons him in an early moment of this

Easter story. If you think about it, Thomas is no worse than the others. Mark's women might have believed, but they do not even tell anyone because of their great fear. Luke's account says that when the women told the apostles, they did not believe them because the story "seemed like nonsense." While Thomas said he wouldn't believe until he put his fingers into Jesus' wounds and his hand into his side, even so, once the Lord was there, he forgot about that demand. Indeed, he burst out with what has been called the strongest proclamation of faith in the Gospels: "My Lord and my God!" Thomas gradually came to have Easter eyes.

To see with Easter eyes takes time. In the end, it's not a matter of skill; it's a gift. "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." As we gather today let us thank God for all those people in our lives who did not see the risen Lord as Thomas did but yet have believed in him. Let us give thanks for all those who have handed on the faith to us. Let us give thanks for Mike and Rita and Missy and Tony who have handed on the faith to Ruby and Davis who today meet the risen Lord in their First Holy Communions.

Paul A. Magnano

Pastor