

Church of the Good Shepherd  
and  
St. John the Evangelist

Easter Sunday  
April 8, 2007  
Fr. Bill McGinty

**“Easter People”**

We are the Easter people. This year, and for the first time, a parishioner asked me what the word Easter meant. I had to go look it up. It is a word borrowed by Early Christians from the name for the pagan Goddess of spring “Eostre.”

Easter is a beginning, just like spring; it heralds in a new era that we call the Kingdom of God. What I love about that concept is that we as followers of Christ and his teaching have an unlimited freedom to plant and sow that Kingdom, that teaching in any way that we wish.

From the empty tomb the women carry the message out into the world that “Christ has overcome death and that he would unite with his disciples in Galilee.”

From that moment, the Gospel goes forth and spreads from place to place taking on a life of its own. Jesus often compared this spread of the word of God, to a Sower going out and sowing seed on the ground.

In this sense the Gospel as a living entity continually renews itself. Jesus speaks of what happens when we first

Hear that “Good News” and how it will grow, if we take it into our hearts. But I would like to challenge us all this morning, that being believers of the word also entails that we also become sowers and planters of the Gospel. That it is our duty and obligation to become teachers, and evangelists because of what Christ and his teaching mean to us.

Someone sent me an e-mail last week, about all that is “good about America”. He was pointing out that Americans have no concept of how lucky, and privileged they are to live in such a wonderful country with so many benefits, that we take for granted and hardly even think about.

Of course, he is right and I can say that without ever having to knock other countries or places. When we begin to count our blessings, freedoms, natural resources, opportunities, history, arts and much more, we realize that we are truly blessed. America is a great place to be. We still have wild life we don’t eat, and thanks to Theodore Roosevelt we still have our most precious and beautiful places preserved.

Thinking on this, over the last few days, I began to consider our Christian faith in the same way. It is just that our theology and the learning that has accumulated over 2000 years is so vast that millions of books cannot contain it, but it is that its beauty has permeated our culture and civilization and our values also.

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It has given birth to freedoms, music and art that we also, all too often, take for granted.

Whether it is Mozart's Requiem or Handel's Messiah, the depth of thought and expression that has spoken of Christ and his Gospel should elevate all of us at least in spirit. We cannot take the gift of our faith for granted.

Today is the culmination of our journey through Lent. We have read Offices and followed the readings. We have done penance, fasted and studied the scriptures. In the last week, we have walked with Christ the last days of his life. On Thursday, we repeated his last supper. On Good Friday, we stood by his cross. At the Vigil last night we lit the Easter fire and filled the darkened church with light, as we processed the Paschal Candle into the church. Then we stood and re-newed our Baptismal promises as we welcomed three new Christians into our midst.

Bishop Paul is so fond of reminding us, Easter Sunday and the Resurrection is not an end, it is a beginning.

It asks us the question: "What are you going to do with your Resurrected Faith in the year to come? What are you going to do with Christ's Gospel? Are you going to put it back into a cupboard, where it will become a dead letter or are you going to plant it in the hearts and minds of others whose life it will transform?"

These are tough questions, because in answering them we are reminded that Lent asked us the same questions about the Christian year that has passed. Did our faith really lie dormant in a cupboard where no one saw it or could possibly identify us as Christian or did we endeavor by every way we could to make Christ known?

There is a poignant scene in Tom Hank's movie *Cast Away* where he has returned from 4 years trapped on a desert island. In the final scene, he is standing at a crossroad with all roads open to him to go North, South, East or West.

It is a total transformation for a life that was previously micro-managed by Fed-Ex and the clock. Easter and Resurrection places us at the crossroads and forces us to ask: "Where am I going?"

Easter and Resurrection reminds us all of the importance of Resurrecting our faith and making it a significant thing in our life.

What can I do that will plant the Gospel in the months to come?

How can I serve Christ's ministry to others in some tangible way?

How can my talents and abilities benefit my brothers and sisters in this fellowship?

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How can I respond to the cry of the Gospel from the abandoned, the despairing, the hungry, the oppressed, the battered and the abused, the victimized, the disenfranchised, the imprisoned, the homeless, the sick, the old and lonely, the shut-in, the poor, the needy, the friendless, the hospitalized, the dying, the grieving, the depressed, the jobless and people without hope?

Each time we stand as one body and proclaim the words of our great Nicene Creed, we are telling God and the world that we have Faith, and the spirit filled gifts, to do something about transforming the lives of every one of these people.

If, that is true, then having faith is not about believing, having faith is about going beyond believing, to transforming those words into a lived reality. A Christian is a person who takes the words of Jesus and resurrects someone else's life.

We cannot take that for granted. How many more Easter's do we believe that we have left? Will we be here next Easter? No. Christians, Easter people, have to seize the day and make Christ's Kingdom and teaching happen now. That is Resurrection. That is why we are called "Easter People" "Do that and the Spirit will truly be a "transforming power" in your life and in the life of everyone you touch.

Let us pray in this Eucharist that we become transforming people and a transforming church. Let us pray this Eucharist that we become sowers of the seed and that the seed helps bring Christ to others.

Amen+

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