

# Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

Easter Sunday  
March 23, 2008  
Fr. Bill McGinty

## **“Jesus is Alive”**

When I was seven I went with my brother and Uncle to see a movie about the Alamo called *The Last Command*. I can remember coming away disappointed that Jim Bowie, Davey Crocket and Col Traves all died. No help arrived, although it had been promised. The defenders and the heroes of the Alamo were defeated. It was hard for a seven year old, brought up on John Wayne and Cavalry movies, to take. There was no rescue. There was no happy ending.

Two years later, aged nine, my father took the entire family to see *A Night to Remember*, about a ship called the *Titanic*. I was mightily impressed till half way through the movie when the ship hit an iceberg and began to sink. Again, I kind of hoped rescue was on the way, but to my surprise no other boat came and most of the people drowned. I can remember thinking as the credits went up: “Who would want to remember this?” There were no laughs and everyone left the cinema with sad faces and probably deeply depressed, I know I was.

It is the same feeling that you leave church with on Good Friday night. You have fasted all day, eating no meat. Jesus dies upon the cross and is buried and sealed in a cold dark tomb.

As a seven year old I had imagined many alternate endings. The apostles get up the courage and rescue Jesus. Pilate has a change of heart. Jesus calls on twelve legends of Angels, who defeat all his enemies and restore him to his former state. But like my movies, it did not happen. As the years rolled on, I began to be glad that it did not happen. Every time a friend, a loved one or an acquaintance fell victim to cancer or some other crippling disease I am glad that my Lord and friend Jesus Christ did not take an easy way out. I am glad that he walked through suffering and that he walked through death and that he walked the walk each of us has to endure and which we see in the pain of all who suffer.

What did he see as he hung there breathing away the last hours of his young life upon the cross? Did he see 6 million victims of the Holocaust; or the Pot bellied children of starving Africa? Did he see the victims of war and the death of millions from diseases that the cost of war could easily cure? Did his mind go to prisoners and to torture, to injustice and endless poverty, to victims of race and inequality? Was that the moment when our God decided to embrace his suffering and take the pain of our sinful world upon his shoulders? Was it in that moment that he died for each of us and in so doing made our death and suffering meaningful?

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Easter morning so very early, is a time for seven years. When you are seven Easter morning surprises the heck out of you. And it's not the chocolate, nor the Easter eggs or half a ton of candy, it is the story that has and is being told.

Jesus who you have watched die is alive. Unbelievable! Jesus somehow has turned things around. He is alive! He has survived death. He has overcome the grave and the tomb. Jesus has won!

The first time, I learned this, at seven, I ran down the street, knocking on every door to tell everyone I could find: "Jesus is alive!"

I can remember that the surprised women who answered the door said: "We know." and gave me some chocolate, but all the men who answered said: "Kid, have you any idea what time it is? Scram!"

I couldn't work out why everyone was not out celebrating in the streets like they did at New Year.

At seven, life is an adventure because of surprise. Yet, it is not the triumph of the tomb and resurrection that is our Christian symbol, but the cross. The cross makes me feel proud. Proud of what it stands for.

It is something that I feel we all want to hold on to, even in the worst of times.

Resurrection is something else. Resurrection is Christ's postlude. When we believe in Resurrection we believe that anything is possible with our God. St Paul said that once you acknowledge that Jesus rose from the dead, nothing in your life can ever remain the same.

He was the last of the Apostles to see the Risen Christ. Lying there on the sands of the desert on the road to Damascus, Christ appeared to him. His hatred of the followers of *the way* disappeared as he realized that these followers of the Christ had been telling the truth all along. Christ had risen and appeared to many. From that moment Paul's life changes and in a radical way.

Walk through these church doors this morning and hear this story and our lives too should change in a radical way. If you too feel like running down West Ann Street and knocking on every door, be warned Al and Shorty Luhrs at the end of the street already know, and besides they are still in Florida, but that is the way today's Gospel should make you feel.

Today's Gospel makes me want to jump up and shout. "What can I do today for the Gospel? What can I do this week for Christ's church? How can I spread the news this week: Jesus is alive!"

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When you stand thinking like this, you become an Evangelist, someone who takes the Gospel out to others. When you start to think like this, people begin to think that you are unhinged. Crazy. You have had a little too much sun. After the Resurrection people thought this about the Apostles, Paul included. At first they laughed and poured scorn, but later they thought it too dangerous to allow.

Resurrection changes everything. We are people of Resurrection, because of it we enter into a covenant with our God in Baptism. We promise faith, he promises eternal life. We promise love, he promised the gifts of his Spirit.

It is those gifts that build churches; that build communities; that build family; that build love between two people.

In Resurrection we gain. All we need do is believe and go out and tell the story, “Jesus lives” now he is always with us.

Praise be his name-Alleluia

Amen+

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