

Homily for Easter Sunday Morning Eucharist
 April 12, 2020
 “Let him Easter in us ...

During these Lenten weeks, I have found myself *reading* and *listening* to the daily news so much more attentively, and today it seems to me that we are still in Lent. Many people are struggling to get the message, the one that Dr. Fauci persistently proclaims, with some even *denying* it and refusing to accept scientific truth. I see photos on TV of people in prolonged pain or dying alone. I see massive graves in New York City, where victims of the virus are being buried because they have no one to claim them. These photos take me quickly in memory to the massive graves from the Holocaust and from famine starvation and to current victims starving and dying from wars in this precarious world of ours. These are all horrific occurrences in human history, reminders to us of the reality of evil, when humankind chooses power *over* rather than care *for* the common good for all of us and for our Earth, the *integral ecology* that Pope Francis calls all of us to commit to.

But I have also found myself *reading* our liturgical texts more deeply each morning and *listening* to them more intently as they have been proclaimed in our liturgies these days. These texts, after all, *clamor* to be put in dialogue with the news of these days. How does the Good News interface with so much bad news today! As Shakespeare might put it, *Yes, that is the question!* John and Peter and Paul have plenty to say to us today, this Easter morning, about this question.

There are two kinds of time, I believe, in these readings today: *Chronos* time and *Kairos* time. *Chronos* is unfolding time with a past, present and future and *Kairos* is revelatory time, event time, where a sudden perception, an inspiring occurs, that takes hold and changes us radically. The Johannine writer is a master of both kinds of time, always interlacing dominant themes of this Gospel with the current narrative for illumination – *moving from darkness to light*, for instance, *or from blindness to sight*, *or from labor pains to birth*.

Notice that Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb while it is still dark. She is in linear time, determined to complete the Jewish practice of proper care for the body after death and she is also in grief. She discovers that the body is not there! In dismay and fright, she flees to Peter and the Beloved One to tell them this! They come, of course, and see what she has seen, and they don't get it! They are not enlightened yet and they just go back home. But Mary stays and she weeps! She doesn't understand this situation, either, but she stays and cries. She *loves* and therefore she *grieves*.

What follows is an extremely human encounter that moves slowly and respectfully from *Chronos* into *Kairos*. Jesus addresses her first as *Woman* – as he had addressed his Mother from the cross just two days earlier, turning these two faithful Marys toward all of us. He asks her why she is weeping. Then, so tenderly, he says: “Mary!” Mariyam in Aramaic. He calls her by name, reminiscent of Isaiah who proclaimed: “I have called you by name; you are mine, and I love you.” And that is it! She responds: “Rabbouni,” which means “special teacher,” one who has changed me by leading me from darkness to light, from ignorance to enlightenment! Mary thus moves into *Kairotic* time. She is grasped even more deeply and permanently by Jesus. She “sees” that he will be with her forever. This truth takes hold and courses through every fiber of her being. Mary cannot touch Jesus for this is not the body she once knew. This is not

resuscitation, but rather a totally transformed life that has lifted up mourning and death, even the ignominious death of a criminal on a cross, into a radically new proclamation: Evil can never triumph; love always wins out! Mary *gets it* and runs again to the disciples as Jesus directs her to do.

Like some contemporary writers composing historical novels who fill in the dialogue when they know real people in history are together, I tend toward thinking that Mary's talk with the disciples went something like this. She says to them: "Jesus has indeed risen from the dead. He told me to tell you that he is returning to his Father who is also our Father. Remember that he told you this already and that he is in us and we are in him, and totally so!" Indeed, Mary well deserves the title that she received in the early Church: she is the Apostle to the Apostles!

And they *do get it*, with the help of Jesus appearing to *them*, too. We see that from our first two readings, Peter and Paul preaching all around the Mediterranean world with confidence and joy and freedom. They proclaim the message: that expansion and inclusion of all in love brings saving healing and wholeness, that death is never the end, and that evil can never triumph, that God has appeared to us *in Christ* and that *we are in Christ!*

We, too, are disciples. Let us be possessed, as Mary was, by the Light and Life and Love of God coursing through our veins. Let us embrace the suffering and death and abandoned tombs of *today* in hope – that Light overcomes the darkness, that the Word made flesh embraces *every* human experience and *holds* it for us, that Eternal Love always dispels evil. Let us correlate our morning meditations on the Word of God with our viewing of the evening news, connecting with all who suffer today and also with all who help with knowledge and research, with direct care and compassion, with reverent and persistent commitment.

The Coronavirus rages on, but so also do the magnolia trees on this campus. They *rage* into bloom! Birds' eggs, too, are breaking open and, in our families and among our friends, babies are being born! So, as Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it *kairotically* in a poem he wrote after hearing of the tragedy of a shipwreck off the Kent coast of England:

Let him Easter in us,
be a dayspring to the dimness of us,
be a crimson-cresseted east, ...a rising sun ...
(be) our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, ...

From: *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, 1877

Yes! Let him Easter in us!

Offered by Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM

Text: John 20: 1-18 The Empty Tomb and Appearances