

The Resurrection: What Does It Mean to You?

This is not going to be a sermon centered on the doubting of faith that the disciple Thomas portrays for us, but about the meaning of his realization of the Jesus' resurrection to him, to the other disciples and to us. The readings for this Sunday were aimed at me. Coming to terms with a meaningful theology for the Resurrection that fits with my relationship with God has vexed me on my spiritual journey. I used to try to make rational sense of it. I am a historian, and we deal in 'just the facts, ma'am' but, of course, God fits no such boundaries, and neither does the Resurrection. Even Peter at the Pentecost in today's reading in Acts is trying to make-meaning of the event of the Resurrection to his Judean audience by tying the claim of Jesus as the Messiah to David's prophecy of the Messiah's resurrection. I understand his need to do so but, it is now too much need of proof for me .

Yes, the meaning of the resurrection can be gleaned only through the lens of the truth of belief. Jesus offered that not only to Thomas, but to all the disciples, a hyper-light jump-start to their belief, if you will. Theologically, the proof of the Resurrection can be found in the empty tomb; but, this is not an event we set out to prove. I have come to terms with the Resurrection through what the risen Jesus means to us. It is in the power of the Resurrection that its meaning is made manifest. And, I have found its power in the grace

that God has always given us, and more clearly as that grace forms the meaning of the redemptive love of Jesus for us. The power of God's grace means more than 'Christ having died for us' because the Resurrection expands that grace through and out of death, and into new life. It is the power of grace that is given to us to give glory to Jesus' sacrifice in how we live.

In Jesus' resurrected body, which in John's, and Luke's, Gospel maintains the scars of his sacrifice, we are ever reminded of Jesus' Maundy Thursday command of us to remember his body in the bread and the wine of what we celebrate as the sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus' resurrected body has transcended even this nobility as he returns to his ragged band of followers who have betrayed him, with the forgiveness of which he had taught them comes only from God. The risen, death-defying Jesus has transcended his embodiment of God's grace to the life-giving embodiment of God's grace. His presence among his reassembled band gave them new life, one which we are still living. Rowan Williams characterizes Jesus' risen embodiment as 'exalted grace'. As the risen Lord who gave of his body into death to show us the way to live, he was 'exalted'. We hear this echoed in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. In Christ's exalted grace we are given grace beyond his ministry. In his resurrection grace is exalted to what it means to live after death. The way to live after death is by the grace of God in Jesus, pulling us together as sisters and brothers, as had the disciples who had scattered. When he offered them his 'peace', and breathed on the *ruah* of God, they

began to understand what Jesus had taught them about the redemptive love of God.

They came back to life in a new community of believers by their belief in God's grace through their relationship with the Incarnate and the risen Lord. From this new community of messianic Jews, the Church eventually came into being. The power of God's grace in resurrecting Jesus is not just in knowing it, but in believing in it and living into our belief.

I think this coming together as community is what I was referencing in my far-too complex Great Vigil sermon when I spoke about the Community Meal program. In our answering a need to supplement the food needs of area families, we are responding to the redemptive love that Christ shows us through the sacraments. Acting as community is sacramental work because it extends the body of Christ from our Communion table at which we celebrate the grace that God has given us through the Resurrected Christ Jesus. We are empowered. Which why I said the power of God's grace which through the risen Lord is the power of God's exalted grace. We are empowered to extend ourselves, our table, our community and the walls of this church beyond their physical borders into a more exalted place.

The burning call of exalted grace ... I could relate to this feeling because that is how I felt when I decided to finally answer the call to the priesthood. When you respond to the burning of answering God's call to be a leader in God's Church, you experience an explosion of God's grace. Jesus' Resurrection is like an internal combustion of our spirit.

It revs our inactive or maybe dead spirit into action. Deciding to live as God intended us, that is not to focus on death but on life, is allowing the power of the Resurrection into our lives. It is not just a exalted state of being for Jesus, but for us as well, and perhaps not just once, but every time on our collective journeys we decide to live our lives in praise to God's resurrection of Christ Jesus. When we decide we are going to live in honor of God's redemptive grace, we are revved into action giving it even more meaning. It's not a realization that can sit still, but must be put into action as the Apostles put into action the formation of the Church. They were so grateful that Jesus came to them, providing proof that, indeed he was the Messiah, that they couldn't just sit with it. And, when, the risen Jesus came with the redemptive words, 'peace be with you', there was an explosion of the power of God's grace because they knew that as a new, a resurrected, community of believers they were as 'imperishable' as Jesus. They were given another chance to give of their lives for the grace God had always given them. They were empowered, driven by the exalted grace of Christ to tell of the transformation it had on their lives, and the meaning that could have for all of us.

How are you empowered by the exalted grace of God that the risen Lord has given to you? These are all Resurrection questions we must engage through our belief in the risen Lord. Exalted grace. What has it done for you? And what will you do for the risen Christ who has given it to you?