

Happy Resurrection Season. Happy Eastertide.

Here you are – the (5PM, 8AM/10:30 Am) faithful on the Second Sunday of Easter. Today is one of the ‘low Sundays’ – one of the Sundays after a huge Feast. Easter was wonderful.

I was thrilled to be back at St. Gabe’s and be with you Palm Sunday through Holy Week, including the Egg Hunt in the graveyard – (I loved the image of Jesus in the tomb on Holy Saturday and the children playing and hunting for symbolic eggs, new life, in the graveyard). Actually, it blew me away – an inviting community breakfast, the Bunny, who is still a mystery to me, (but, I am hoping to find out after today), and 3 simply amazing Easter worship celebrations.

Best of all, however, was that I could see and feel your Easter joy! And Andrew’s sermon made an impact, didn’t it?!

So – to now. We have today and next week for the stories of the resurrected Jesus. We will read the gospel and John and the Ascension from Luke. (For the record, I think there should be more of a fuss over the Ascension...) Be as it is, this week and next week are stories of the RISEN JESUS **appearing** to his followers, and the next 4 weeks we will explore Jesus’ teachings about faith and intimacy with God. (R)

In short, faithful ones, today, allow yourself **the AMAZing, the** Easter rejoicing of ‘recognizing’ Jesus. We have time to come to grips that this resurrection is not **JUST** a **resuscitation** back to life — It is not even ‘**JUST**’ earth-shaking - which I say with tongue in cheek, *not just earth-shaking*, like the falling down of an over 200 year old tree that dropped to the ground out by the chapel. Giving **Movement under your feet**. The resurrection is bigger than we can imagine, try as we may.

I am game to take this earth shattering, resurrection experience, this tree in our path, back to Genesis – back to the beginning , and even before the beginning – I am game - are you? I believe that our Cosmic Christ is seen by us – is intimate with us, and helps this sorry world. After all, things could be worse, and have been worse.

I want to be SURE I see and recognize the good in the world, the God in the world.

The resurrection appearance stories demonstrate to me, to us, how individuals and communities (in the years 1 (one), the year 40 – 80 and 100 – 2,000 and now, understandably struggled to perceive and believe. It reminds me of the disciples task, and of the hard work we have to do.

Today, in the book of Acts Peter gives a summary of the very recent HISTORY of the crucifixion, and makes a solid reference to David, - as an evidence builder to the key fact that there were witnesses to this event. There were lots of resurrection theories in those days – **but this one came true. Peter said so. ‘This Jesus, God raised up.’**

Richard Rohr says it well. Quoting from Acts 2:36 –which immediately follows today’s reading, he goes to verse 36; it often nice to see where the reading is going. And I quote ‘The core message of the incarnation of **God in Jesus** is that the **Divine Presence** is **here**, in us and in all of creation, not only ‘over there’ in some far-off realm. The early Christians came to call this seemingly new and available PRESENCE ...‘both Lord and Christ”. Rohr further explains, ‘Seeing and Recognizing Are Not the Same”.

We humans, we Christians, need encouraging. Fittingly, helpfully, the psalm today *mess-ages* us, our needy egos, and stabilizes us into the moment) ‘You (GOD,YOU) are my portion and my cup’. In your **presence** there is **fullness** of joy! 1 (First)Peter gives us the phrase, ‘birth into living hope.’ Even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.’

These words of beautiful hopefulness are the lead-up to Thomas, dear Thomas.

There are 3 things, at least, that stand out to me. Thomas, Jesus’s resurrected MOVING Spirit, and Jesus in creation.

How did I get to the creation part in this gospel reading – well, besides the fact that the earth shook– it was the BREATHE – RUAH – the Holy Spirit. And, of course,– and you each may have found another meaningful phrase or curiosity in today. These next weeks are a good time to talk to your Christian friends, and your St. Gabe’s friends, about that which YOU wonder.

Because, brothers and sisters, letting go, breathing, forgiving and welcoming are always tucked into the deeper meaning, in your life and mine.

Now, in this sermon, you and I are NOT going to be using any of those profane words about Thomas – we are NOT going to convey an unfortunate and off-putting description of a Faithful disciple - and we are not going to be CASTING any.... – well...oops.....any denigrating words.....(You know, fill in the blank...casting any....).... Do you know the word I am referring to?..... The “D’ word has sent folks off course from the REAL meaning of this Gospel, me included. We are not going to mistakenly let the word that rhymes with route – that is route, not root – It is not a swear – but ... That word that I am not saying, but may slip....

Thomas was a FAITHFUL disciple.

The Greek word *pistos* is better translated to mean Faithful. Easy to do, we have often been emphasizing the wrong word to describe Thomas..... You can whisper to your neighbor if you know what word I am trying to avoid....Go Ahead – have you been calling him Faithful Thomas.or....? (whisper) I know I did, and I enjoyed it. I liked the ‘word that is not being spoken’ for awhile....but then, I came to see, that it limited me. So, I would like to stick up for Thomas for a minute.

(and I will quote from a priest who writes sermons for other priests! He plays the guitar.. *uses storytelling, to proclaim the Good News. He plays drums in On a Bus in DC and is in a Grateful Dead band.*

So, he is cool. He says Thomas is a good guy.

.For instance, when word came to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, and Jesus said, "Let's go to him," all the disciples but one said, "No, there are people around Jerusalem and Bethany who want to kill you!" Only Thomas, faithful and trustworthy, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Thomas is faithful and trustworthy. Jesus knows this. There's no BLANK (doubt) about it." For Thomas is **alone** among this room full of disciples when, (with recognition) he declares, "My Lord and my God."

I want faithful – that soft and hopeful word- to be associated with Thomas. He was simply expressing what all the disciples were feeling. He then had chance to explore, by invitation, Jesus' wounds – so he could be sure.

I guess he thought it was too good to be true that his beloved Jesus could rise again.

Jesus says to him, touch me, recognize me, HOLD ON. Unlike Mary Magdalene - Yes you can touch me- and you can see me. You know, deep in your soul who I am. You have been faithful to me in the flesh and now you are in the spirit. Hold onto the smell of me.... Use your imagination, but remember me.

Notice, the doors were closed, the important message as Jesus 'came and stood among them' is that he BREATHED on them – the ruah – the BREATH saying Peace be with you. And he sent them. As the father sent him. As we are sent.

Focusing on the breath – His spirit, Jesus 'proved' his point with an already faithful disciple.

Some of you 'breathed' on your neighbor – the living God within you came out – You are the new miracles – the reaffirmed baptized – You are the faithful who come ...searching. You are the people of God, of Jesus, of the Spirit, in the world.

It is You folks.

Let FAITHFUL echo softly up to the high ceiling at St. Gabriel's. Let's remember the hilarity of Andrew's Easter message – the poor chalice bearer's slip of the tongue – the clang, the clang, ring again and again, but this week let us say 'faithful, faithful, faithful Thomas, the disciple.

COME –come here - to stay faithful. Come for strength, not only for solace. Our work in the world is our hands and feet - . We too need to be reminded.... But deep in our soul we know – that Jesus is just everywhere – even from the pulpit letting us laugh in our seat, as we acknowledge that the world is not perfect, people swear, words hurt – and it can echo and echo. Until the Alleluia.

Remember – Jesus told us we could do greater things than he did. That may be why he did not 'just do another miracle' – it is our turn.

Believe – share the miracles you see – pray a lot – good stuff will happen. You will be surprised. Come to the aid of another – you will feel the love.

By the way, it is good to be back. It is good to have Jesus back.

Alleluia! Allelujah!