



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Homily – Easter Sunday

April 5, 2015

Today's gospel starts early in the morning – while it is still dark. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the “beloved disciple” are among the closest of Jesus' friends. However, when they discover that his tomb is empty, Mary and Peter do not recognize the reality that Jesus is risen from the dead. That is beyond their understanding, their imagination, their fondest dream.

At nearly every step in the gospel Jesus' disciples are slow to understand him, and who can blame them for this? Who would have thought that the Son of God would become human like us in all things but sin? Who would have imagined the great depth of God's love for us – all of whom are sinners? Who would have surmised that God's plan for our salvation would require his beloved Son to give his life for us – especially in the cruel, harsh crucifixion?

Who would have thought that the Savior of the entire human family would come from Galilee, someone who spoke with an accent that caused

people in Jerusalem and elsewhere to look down upon and laugh at him? Unlike the religious experts and leaders of his day, Jesus lived among the poor, the uneducated, the people who did the hard work that others avoided or refused to do. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and proclaimed the good news of God's love for everyone. He often sat down at dinner with public sinners and outcasts, and their lives were transformed. He was full of surprises!

And now, just when his disciples must have thought that his life was a failure, they encounter the empty tomb. The burial cloths are still there; no one has robbed the tomb! What could this possibly mean? What new surprise was in store for them? Notice that it is the beloved disciple – the one whom Jesus loved and the one who loved Jesus – who is the first to believe in the Lord's resurrection.

Today's first reading takes place several years later. Peter has encountered the risen Lord between the resurrection and the ascension. He has been forgiven for his denials of Jesus when the Lord was arrested. Peter is now the bold leader of the disciples, proclaiming the good news. And yet, there is a new surprise for him. He is sent to the home of a Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius, to proclaim the gospel! For Peter, a Christian Jew, this is new revelation: "I see that God shows no

partiality” (Acts 10:35). Immediately afterward, the Holy Spirit descends upon Cornelius and his household, and Peter baptizes the first Gentile converts.

St. Paul reminds the Colossians – and us – that, as members of a community of faith, we have been raised with Christ through baptism. This means, that we need to learn how to look at the persons and events of our own lives with the eyes of faith – as God sees them. If we do so, we will be surprised at how active God is in our lives and in our world! But then, like Peter, we will have to change the way that we see and listen and live our lives.

We, too, need to move from the initial darkness of the empty tomb to the full daylight of Jesus’ resurrection. As Jesus’ disciples we are called to be light to the world – to walk in the light, not the darkness – not to indulge in a fascination with violence and hatred, but to proclaim the good news of God’s everlasting love for us.

As Pope Francis has pointed out, “Christ’s resurrection is not a happy ending in a movie, but the intervention of God the Father where human hope is shattered.” Even as we celebrate Easter, we are not to forget Good Friday! The Holy Father says that “watching Jesus in his passion, we

see a mirror of the sufferings of all [people], and we find the divine answer to the mystery of evil, of pain, of death.” While the Son of God may seem defeated as he hangs upon the cross, it is truly, in the Holy Father’s eyes, “a puzzling mystery, the mystery of the great humility of God. . . ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son’.”

Yes, God is full of surprises – good surprises, wonderful surprises, surprises full of grace and love – enduring, unconditional love. And so, we proclaim today:

Jesus has risen! Alleluia! Let us rise to new life with him!