

**Easter Day (10 am)
April 12, 2009**

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Wouldn't it be nice if Easter sermons could be simple, direct and, of course, short and to the point. That would be nice. Of course, it would presume that we knew what we were talking about. And that the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was simple, direct, and to the point of easy comprehension. I'm afraid it is not.

None of us knows what really happened at daybreak that awesome Sunday morning. There were no witnesses. No one saw what happened. They only saw the result. There is no record of what Jesus himself experienced or felt that day. But, in my imagination at least, he must have been almost deliriously happy, peaceful, and grateful to his Father, the God of The Promise. And the calm result of his experience is in the word he speaks most often in every one of the post-resurrection stories: Peace! Be at peace!

And yet, in the gospel versions, everyone trembles and is frightened. In today's gospel (John's) we see Mary, Peter and John running back and forth from the empty tomb. In Mark's version read last night, we see a stunned group of the women shaking in their amazement. They are all shaking in grief. And soon they will be shaking in joy.

But no one knows exactly what has happened.

Odd, isn't it? No one knows. And yet this resurrection becomes the foundation of the rest of their lives—and ours too.

All the gospel people do is tremble; they shake. Sometimes for grief; sometimes for joy. And their bodies must get confused. Mary Oliver has a beautiful, short poem called “We shake with Joy.” She says: “We shake with joy, we shake with grief. / What a time they have, these two / housed as they are in the same body” (*Evidence*).

We do not know what resurrection means. And yet, we do. It is *in* us; it *is* us—thanks to God's gracious design in Christ. We do know! If we can only stop trying so hard to understand, and instead, just try to tremble and shake at the love.

Death is no more! we sing. Even as we die. “Where is your sting?” we cry. Even as we still hurt. And yet, somewhere deep inside us, sometimes in spite of the dis-illusion and dis-interest we feel at times, we do know God is now with us until the end of time—and even beyond; through death God lives.

This is God's day of celebration. God's final Promise now realized. It is what God has always wanted for all of creation. And it affects not just Jesus of Nazareth; it affects the whole cosmos. It is intimate, and huge at the same

time.

Annie Dillard, in her book *For the Time Being*, writes a good deal about Teilhard de Chardin. His understanding of resurrection was cosmic and gigantic. And she pays tribute to that larger sense of resurrection. But in searching for the intimate meaning of resurrection, Dillard writes: “In any instant the sacred may wipe you with its finger. In any instant the bush may flare, your feet may rise, or you may see a bunch of souls in a tree. In any instant you may avail yourself of the power to love your enemies; to accept failure, slander, or the grief of loss; or to endure torture.”

But He is risen. And so we must beware of how we now pray.

And so most of us now do pray, when we do, in a new voice. It is often the voice of Thomas (whom we will hear from in next’s week’s gospel story): “I do believe—kind of—but help my unbelief.” And we still tremble (at least on occasion) and feel both joy and grief. But we know something very important because of today. And yet we don’t know exactly what we do know. It is that faith that asks more questions than it can possibly answer; it is our deep conviction (on some days at least) that just being here, being alive (no matter how long or short), just being is too good to be true. And yet here we are—such as we are—warts and disbelief included. Here we are held in God’s love

through it all—even death itself. That’s crazy. But it’s true. And somewhere we know that truth is risen and will live forever. As will we all!

Just know that *it is all* held in the love that is this day! This is God’s doing; this is God’s day. Jesus says to his friends today (that includes you and me): Please just let God do God’s thing in you—as God did in me. And in the words of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (who believed the word “easter” was a verb, not a noun or a time, or even an event), let our prayer today be his. “Let God Easter in us.”