

Easter Vigil 2009

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What in the world is going on? What in the world is going on? I wonder if the women in Mark's gospel fled from the tomb thinking something like that. What in the world is going on? Or, are we out of our minds? Did you see...? Did you hear...? Who in the world will ever believe what has happened?

For some strange reason, the editors of the lectionary leave out the "cliffhanger" ending of Mark's gospel. And that's a shame because this final line of Mark's gospel describes the very real reaction of anyone who encounters the mystery of Christ's resurrection: "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Fear and amazement? In the Greek it's *tromos kai ekstasis*, trauma and ecstasy. Something happened to these women that awakened their deepest fears and their most exquisite joy. What was going on in their world was the shocking realization that the world had been turned upside down and was spinning around and around and out of control. The world was off its axis of evil and sin and death and a new world of love and sacrifice and Life with a big L was re-placing the old. In and through their friend Jesus whose death on a cross they witnessed. And that is simply TOO MUCH for the human mind and heart to fathom. And so Satan's power still has a grip on them, a traumatizing fear that makes them run wildly from the tomb. But still... oh be still... for I am your God. Be still now and listen and you will hear my voice. With the fear there is the ecstasy, God's Spirit is moving, breathing new life and hope into them as

God's spirit breathed life over the waters of creation, as God's spirit breathed new life into the Crucified one, as God's spirit breathes us on this Holy night.

It is a shame that most people in the church will not hear the "cliffhanger" ending since it is, I believe, what most of us live in our lives of faith. It is that in-between of fear and ecstasy that is so real because we have to live "in this world" where the axis of evil, sin and death still traumatizes us.

But wait, St. Paul says, "Are you not aware"... Don't you get it? It's all over. Death has no power, nor does sin, nor Satan. Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through Baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. His death was death to sin, once for all. His life is life for God. In the same way you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. Paul insists that our share in the life of the Risen one is enough, is more than enough, is all that we need in the here and now, to free us from the prison of our fears. What in the world is going on? Paul answers "everything is going on, except sin and death" "life itself in its beauty and its pain" is going on and on and on in Christ Jesus.

So what in your world is going on? Fear and Ecstasy like the women fleeing the tomb? Or brazen belief like St Paul's. I know that tomorrow, or at least the next day, fear and ecstasy will be what in the world is going on. But for tonight, let's go with the brazen belief that it is finished. It is accomplished. It is now and forever.