

## **Easter Sunday 2018**

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; 1 Cor 5:6b-8; Jn 20:1-9

Good Morning and Happy Easter! A long time ago I worked with a man who was very unique. He and I were therapists at a substance abuse clinic in Worcester. A very interesting guy, we would sit together sometimes to do our paperwork together. He was a character: larger than life, always with something to say. He was demanding of change from those individuals he worked with, and challenged them strongly - always with a clear sense of compassion and caring. What those clients did not fully know, as I did, was how much he genuinely loved them and wanted nothing but what was best for them - he wanted them to have a better life.

When we worked together he was only in his 40's, yet because of an illness he had to stop working. One day a notice was put in all our mailboxes. It was a photocopy of a newspaper clipping ... an obituary clearly displaying our friend's name. We all thought: "well that's the end of an era" ... we'd never see someone like this guy again. One day, several months later, the receptionist looked up from her desk and there he was standing in front of her. She yelled out in shock. He asked her what the big deal was, he just stopped by to say hi. Well when someone you thought was dead stops by to say hi ... it shakes you up a bit.

A similar event struck the disciples waiting in the upper room after that first Good Friday. They knew of the death of their friend. A "larger than life figure" who challenged sharply, yet guided with compassion and caring. A man who always acted in love to those he came to serve, who wanted to bring them to a new life ... a better life. Today we celebrate that morning when a brave woman of that group went out to go to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty, and ran back to tell the others. Peter and John run off to see - they find it just as the woman said, but they still don't quite understand that he's risen - it is still a shock that he could be alive. It takes a while for them to put it together and for it to sink in.

We are told in the first reading that Jesus ate and drank with the disciples after his death. There are many other stories of his appearances in the scriptures, and in other historical sources as well. I recently watched an interview in which an atheist historian spoke about her work trying to prove that Christianity was false. She reasoned that if the resurrection didn't happen, then she could discredit the whole religion. However, the more she looked at various sources, the more she was convinced that the resurrection did happen. She became a Catholic, and the

more she has dug into and studied her Catholic faith, the more she sees how sensible and logical the whole thing is - she concluded that it can't be just made up. She has discovered what many of us know. That the Church is the way that Jesus will continue to be present in the world; the way we all can join together to share his mission - a bigger plan than the apostles could have ever understood in the beginning.

Jesus is alive, and working in this world - although we can't see some guy in sandals and a white robe walking around. The Disciples thought Jesus was still dead because they hadn't seen him yet, my friends from the clinic thought our friend was dead because we were told that he was dead when he was really alive - not understanding what Jesus is up to, not fully understanding how he is still present in the Church, not seeing him on TV ... that doesn't mean he's not there. That Jesus who cared for others, that Jesus who challenged sharply but always with love and compassion, that Jesus who wants to give us a better life is still here among us but in a different way - still challenging us, still guiding us, still wanting us to believe more deeply in him, still wanting us to share in eternal life.

We owe God our lives, we owe God all that we have, and because we don't see God walking around, we can forget God is there and is due respect, honor, and praise. This is part of the reason we come to church each Sunday - to give a little of our time for the God who gave so much for us when he came down as Jesus Christ and died for us. We also gather to hear the word, to let God inspire us with the answers to the questions we struggle with. We come to be supported by this community, and we come to share the Body and Blood of Christ which gives us strength to go through the week ahead.

Jesus is present to us not as a single preacher in Palestine, but in the bodies and hearts of all those faithful to him, and he moves in the Holy Spirit that is active in our lives. Jesus by his death and resurrection has freed us to live the life he has called us to - and he has called us to remain connected to him so we can share eternal life. His resurrection proves who he is, so shouldn't we take seriously everything else he has taught us. If we can share in the life and ministry of this parish community, if we can open our hearts and investigate the depths of our faith tradition, we may just find something hidden there - the presence of the risen Christ. When you find him again, hopefully you won't be as shocked as the receptionist who saw a man she thought was dead at her desk. Hopefully you will feel the warm and peaceful feeling of being home again with a trusted friend. Peace to you all and HAPPY EASTER!