

Homily Given by Fr. John Sassani on March 31, 2013 – Easter Sunday

The first Easter, I'm beginning to think, was a very disorienting experience. The women bring spices to the tomb to finish Jesus' burial, but the tomb is open, and his body is gone. Jesus' body isn't where it's supposed to be.

Then, two men in dazzling garments show up. "Why do you search for the living one among the dead?" they ask. This would have been troubling news. The women saw him die. They saw his body in the shroud. They go back and announce this extraordinary message to the disciples. Peter gets up and goes – and finds the tomb empty.

All of this is happening so that we might have life and have it abundantly. But are we included in this? St. Paul writes today, "You have died, and your lives are hidden now with Christ in God."

What does that *mean*?! Talk about disorientation!

How is it that we have died? This is Easter! Jesus is Risen; I am not dead; you are not dead! But last night, a young woman was baptized. She was changed – like dying and being born again – born in Christ, risen from the dead. "Seek what is above," writes St. Paul. And our lives are "hidden in him" – in his new life. YOU share in his new life, and so do I. What does that mean? It means that you are and always can be NEW in HIM.

--It is through little moments with Christ – in the middle of chaos in your life – a prayer, and peace follows.

--It is through Holy Communion. You've gone to Holy Communions hundreds of times -and you know it's special. But one day, it overwhelms you; it really feels like he is with you.

--For me, I think about a time just before my ordination, while I was still in the seminary. My spiritual director asked if I had any concerns as I approached ordination. I presumed his question had to do with celibacy. However, my concern had to do with the words of institution/consecration in the Mass. I was convinced that the bread and wine truly became the Body and Blood of Christ when priests spoke the words of institution/consecration, but how would I know when *I* spoke the words of consecration that Christ was truly present? I don't think my spiritual director expected me to raise that concern.

Christ himself would assure me in time, and this is how it happened. After ordination, I was assigned to Sacred Heart Parish in Roslindale. I began celebrating Mass regularly. One day at the consecration, I was holding the host and saying the words of institution, "This is my body..." and lifting the cup and saying, "This is my blood..." Tears came to my eyes...it would happen again and again that first summer. I was worried. What was happening to me?

Eventually, I saw my spiritual director and told her about my tears at the consecration. She told me, "That's a consolation, an increase of faith, hope, and love in you. It is a way of Christ assuring you. He is responding to the concern that you had before ordination, letting you know in a very personal way 'I am with you always.'"

The Risen Christ hasn't just gone to heaven; he's with us now, as he said: "I am with you always." He is making us NEW. He's here today, offering us his love and grace to renew our faith.

Faith. Faith is not just the ideas of Catholicism. Faith is a living relationship with our Living Lord, our Living Lord who is hidden in *you* so that he can be manifested through *you*.

Today, the bread and wine he will make new – into his Body and Blood. The bread and wine cannot resist his power at work in them. We *can* choose to resist his power; I can; you can. But – we are given the chance to be made new by renewing our baptismal promises today.

May the experience of this Easter – and of the realization of Christ's being where we can find it hard to imagine he is – in me – in you – making us new – bring us to the incredible joy of Easter.