

Easter Mass During the Day - 2021

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

Good Morning and Happy Easter! The event we celebrate today, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is maybe hard for some people to swallow - the whole need for his death and resurrection can confuse people who are not willing to believe it in faith. If you remember the old Laurel and Hardy comedy team (the older ones will, the younger ones check it out on Youtube), you may remember the classic line “Well, this is another fine mess you’ve gotten me into”! We are in a mess. Following our own way has led humans to cause a separation in the relationship that God wanted us to have with us. It may be hard to see what Jesus had to die and to rise in order to put that right. We heard in the Gospel that the disciples didn’t understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead. They didn’t understand what he had just done for all of us.

How does this group of let down, and disorganized followers go on? They have been through the trauma of Jesus’ death - they should have given up! They didn’t understand what Jesus had been teaching, how could they be expected to teach others without his guidance - how could they spread a Gospel that they didn’t even understand yet. This is the recipe for a group that is going to fall apart. If you have a gifted and charismatic leader they have the power to transform a generation or two if they stay alive and keep leading and building their movement. But if they die leaving such an impossibly weak group behind - it is doomed. These people were not ready to lead a religious movement - especially one facing the persecution that this one was. No such group, where the leader was only there for a few years and then died before the group was even really established has lasted. But this one did. What’s even more crazy: They were teaching that their dead leader actually rose from the dead, spoke with them, and now is there but can’t be seen. They even claimed that he was still at work through them as his body and present physically in the Eucharist in a “mysterious” way that can’t be fully explained, and he is the only way to salvation after death. Who could take all that seriously? Who would believe that?!

I would! Not because I am a really naive person, not because I haven’t looked at all the arguments against it (because I have read thousands of pages on that), not because I don’t sometimes have the same doubts everyone else does. I believe it because of too much personal evidence that Jesus is living and active in the world - too many things for me to just throw it out. I also believe because what we believe is too incredible and fits together too perfectly to not

believe (ever hear the saying ... “you just can’t make stuff like this up”). Even smarter people than me have also believed. Simon Greenleaf was one of the founders of Harvard Law School and was a brilliant man. He was very influential in drafting the rules of evidence used in the U.S. court system to this day. Greenleaf was an atheist - didn’t even believe in God - yet was challenged by his students to investigate the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection. After personally collecting and examining the evidence, Greenleaf became a Christian and concluded... “The resurrection of Christ is the most verifiable fact of ancient history.” What did he find that convinced him? I don’t know. But safe to say that this expert in evidence thought that there was more going on here than a group of people making up a story.

The second reading tells us to *clear out the old yeast, so that you can become a fresh batch of dough*. To really celebrate this feast we need to work to clear out the old yeast of doubt and replace it with the yeast that grew in Simon Greenleaf and billions of others. It’s really not so hard. We believe things all the time on faith about a whole range of topics that have been told to us by experts. We could put that same level of faith that we give them into something that has outlived many expert opinions, and many attacks over the millennia. A group like the Apostles - and all the messed up generations that have followed - could not have continued to go on for over 2000 years unless that same leader was mysteriously present to them.

We as Catholic Christians profess that presence of the risen Christ in our midst. We believe that today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. After paying the debit we owe to God for our sins, He is now transformed into a body with no boundaries into which we can enter by Baptism, in in which we can enter with him to Heaven. We have the opportunity to commune with and to receive that same body that was risen from the dead and came to eat and drink with his disciples in the Eucharist today. We are enabled to become more a part of that mysterious presence of Jesus that works through his believers in the world. Maybe we could let that yeast raise in you, if you do you could begin to see the whole world differently, to have a new perspective on the situations of life, and have a greater and more firm hope in the future. We have only to open our hearts in faith in his resurrection to encounter a loving God who has come to be with us in the flesh - and then to explore and learn the great wisdom of the truths that he taught - truths that show us the way to a better life. The mysterious and loving God has risen in Jesus Christ and dwells among us, let us give thanks: ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.