

Easter/Easter Vigil  
Reflection/Homily 2020  
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Who am I? I offer this rhetorical but reflective question as a jumping off point for our Easter celebrations. For us to be mindful that indeed we are a new creation a central point in our celebrations and in our current coronavirus life adaptations.

In the Easter Vigil, we always have the same set readings from the Old Testament which outline Salvation History and the Epistle from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. The changing element is the Gospel, depending on the year. We are currently in the Year A cycle of readings for the Church. In Cycle A we hear predominantly from the Gospel of Matthew. Each Gospel writer has various themes and perspectives they are conveying through their writing. St. Matthew is writing to a predominantly Jewish community and so we see those thematic overtones in his gospel writing. We see this in the first line of the Gospel at the Easter Vigil, that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb early on the first day of the week after the Sabbath.

Often as Christians, sometimes we get this idea that the Sabbath is synonymous with Sunday however, it is not. The Sabbath for our Jewish brothers and sisters is actually Saturday, the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the day upon which the Lord rested from creating i.e. Saturday. As Christians we keep our Sabbath day as Sunday, celebrating the day of the Resurrection of the Lord. Sunday is our holy day. The significance here is that one, it shows the Lord rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, but further, the Lord rises on which day of the week? The Lord rises on the first day of the week. This ties back to the First Reading at the Easter Vigil from the book of Genesis which is the first story of creation.

In the story of creation we hear how God breathes upon the waters and by the power of His Word creation comes into existence, light from darkness, living creatures, and eventually God creates human beings. Interestingly, God says, *let us create man in our image*. In this statement, God uses plural rather than singular language. Who is this us? At first glance maybe one would assume that this "us" refers to angels. Even the creation of Adam depicted by Michaelangelo depicts a myriad of beings along with God, seeming to suggest angels. However, do angels create? There is no evidence of this. In Sacred Scripture and Tradition we see angels as messengers, guardians, and the like, but not involved in creation. Then what about this "us"?

This draws us back to remember, who we are, i.e. why I started with the question of, who am I? We see in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis God the Father, The Spirit in the might wind sweeping over the abyss, and the Word coming to life as things are spoken into existence. In these things we see the "us" as the Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present here in the beginning of creation. Therefore, when we hear God say let us create man in our image, we remember that God is a Trinity and we are created in that same likeness.

A central element to being created in the likeness of God is the very fact that we've also been created or made for one another, that is to say, for community. In a time of sheltering and social distancing perhaps we are more aware now than ever before how much we are made for community. Sometimes, it is that when we don't have something we're more aware of how much we need it, i.e. taking things for granted.

I've been realizing this more and more as these days of distancing and isolation continue. At first, I am quite naturally an introvert and being in the country where there's more distance between people, the social distancing thing was not that impactful at its inception. As time has gone on though, and celebrations like Holy Thursday and Good Friday along with our normal Masses have gone on without a community present, a certain emptiness or longing has developed. This is not to say that I'm struggling more than the average person in these times but rather, I'm pointing to the felt realization that something we have been created for, is missing. However, regardless of where or who we are, the Resurrection has happened and we are still a new creation in Christ, and the Easter mystery lives on in us!

For example, like the mystery of creation in the beginning where creation started, we become new creations in Christ through our Baptism. In Baptism, we gain a share in the life of Christ who rose from the dead on the first day of the week, ushering in a new era, a new creation. Just like in the original story of creation, the Spirit comes upon the water, the Word first spoken in creation is alive and powerful, the presence of the Father is there, in all this we are new creation and a share in true life.

One way to remember our createdness in a loving redeeming God is to take the first Story of Creation in Genesis chapter 1 and go outside, read, ponder, reflect. Perhaps do a Lectio Divina, a type of prayer where we read scripture once, then several more times slowly and reflectively, asking what we are hearing, what is standing out, and pondering where the Spirit us is moving in light of our reflection.

In these times we might feel like some of the first disciples in that in between place between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. We know that the end result is an empty tomb, a God who creates anew. As we encounter an empty tomb on the first day of the week, this Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday, may we realize who we are, we are indeed a new creation in Christ, a new creation in the One whose image we have been created. This year, we might be celebrating in different surroundings and cathedrals of trees and other created things on our daily walks. As we do so, may we be particularly grateful for the gift of being created in the likeness of God. Grateful for being created out of the generosity of God's love. Grateful that being one with the Lord gives us the hope to know that God, not a virus or other things, has the last word. Grateful that even though we may not know what, that God is creating something anew in each of us. We are a people of The Resurrection and Alleluia is our song as St. John Paul II the Great would say.