

“Resurrection - Faith and Hope”

Easter Homily

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by Father Brian Timoney

He had to rise from the dead. Resurrection! It is the ultimate act of faith on our part and the ultimate source of hope for us. We are among those of whom Jesus said, “Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.”

Now, the very idea that someone who was dead, would be seen walking around simply boggles the mind. And yet, St. Paul says, “If Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain and we are still in our sins.” He was staking his whole life on the truth that Jesus was raised from the dead, and, indeed, eventually gave his life for that truth, as did the other apostles and thousands of Christians in the years since.

Though Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, James, Thomas, and the other disciples, hundreds of others, ... though they saw, they literally could not believe their very eyes because it was something that no one in all of human history had ever experienced before. What exactly did they see? They saw a figure, a body that, at first, they did not recognize, a body that appeared and disappeared mysteriously, a body that went through a locked door, a body that ate meals with them. Very, very strange indeed! Clearly, it was not just a resuscitated corpse, exactly as it had been during life. But they were convinced that they experienced Jesus as alive, raised from the dead. And, as I said, they were so convinced that they were prepared to die for that truth.

Since then, theologians, trying to explain all this, have taken refuge in a term, a “glorified body.” What that means, nobody really knows. But it is something that every Christian believes deep down in his or her soul, that Jesus is alive. For the apostles and the early Christians, the whole experience was a vindication of the life and teaching of Jesus, and particularly a vindication of his passion and death. His passion and death had been traumatic for them, but now they realized that he had been raised from the dead by the Father because of his faithfulness to his mission, even to the point of dying on a cross. His terrible suffering is now seen to have had meaning and purpose, to have not been in vain, and what the Bible calls “the ultimate penalty of sin,” death, has now been conquered. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Death is no longer the conqueror. Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, he has conquered death and from now on, he rules, and he rules with love.

Resurrection is not only the ultimate act of faith for us, but it is also the ultimate source of our hope. It had appeared that evil had triumphed, but its triumph was short-lived. And when we look at our

own lives, at our own struggles to be better people, we could easily become very, very discouraged. And when we look at the world around us and look at the news every day, we could easily fall into despair. But the followers of Jesus who had denied him, who had run away, who were in hiding fearful of their lives, they were transformed by the experience of the Risen Lord. And their faith and their hope was resurrected.

Now it is true that that faith and that hope was not fully realized until the Holy Spirit came upon them, but the Resurrection of Jesus was the fundamental reason for their hope, their hope that all of the promises of Jesus would be fulfilled. They were now full of optimism for themselves and for the world around them. On this Easter Day, we too should be filled with hope for ourselves and for our world, in spite of all that we see going on around us we are confident that sin and evil will not ultimately prevail. And that hope is not just for this life, but even more powerfully for our lives after death. Because of Christ's Resurrection, we are confident that we can overcome sin in our personal lives here on earth and that our bodies will, after death, somehow... somehow share in the glory of the risen Lord in heaven. And so today, and indeed it should be every day of our lives, we shout out with joy, "Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!"