

“Easter Sunday”
Homily of April 15, 2006
by Fr. Brian Timoney

About two years ago or so, I got this invitation to join the Apostleship of the Sea, to become a chaplain on cruise ships. I hesitated. I really did. I questioned whether this was something that I really wanted to do and something that would be good, a good ministry for me. And so I spoke to one of my friends and, without hesitation, he said, “Go for it! Life is short. You’ll be a long time dead.” And so, I did.

I think that today, God would object to that phrase, “... a long time dead.” Easter is, of course, the most important feast of our church and it tells us to be glad that we have a God who proclaims that death is not the final victory, that we will not be “a long time dead!” Yes, resurrection of Christ is God saying that death is not final. Resurrection is the defeat of violence. It is life triumphing over the inevitability of human death. When a person dies, we say, “Well, may they rest in peace.” But God raised his son from the dead. He did not let his son “rest in peace.” And because of the resurrection of Jesus, he will not let any of us rest in peace while we are still alive in this world because the resurrection of Jesus shakes up every single aspect of our lives. It compels us to look at life in a totally new way.

Jesus died a very, very violent death and his enemies thought that they finally and completely got rid of this man who seemed to be a threat to both the Jewish and the Roman authorities. If they had only known how wrong they were! He was raised from the dead, and their troubles were only beginning. It was the resurrection of Jesus that transformed an ordinary run-of-the-mill execution (because the Romans of course crucified thousands), transformed such an event into an earth-shattering event. It was the resurrection of Jesus that gave final meaning to his whole life and is the great affirmation of life itself. Without the resurrection of Jesus all that went before on Good Friday would be just a senseless bloodbath, an orgy of cruelty. Resurrection is affirming that faithfulness and commitment to God, even to the point of death, is life-giving. And this is at the heart of the whole mystery of the suffering of Jesus and his death on the cross. It was not that God wanted such a bloody end for his son. What God wanted was that his son be faithful, be committed and faithful to the mission that was given him, the mission to proclaim a loving and merciful God. And Jesus was faithful, even though he knew it would result in death. And because of his faithfulness God the Father raised Jesus from the dead.

Today is a hymn to life, in all of its manifestations. the teeming life in the oceans around us, the multitude of living species of animal and bird, the luxuriant life of flower and forest, but above all, the incomparable glorious lives of us human beings, made in the image and likeness of God

and called to mirror and emulate the life of Jesus himself, our Lord and Savior, and destined to eternal life with him. The resurrection of Jesus is the affirmation of the eternal life of the human spirit. The physical death of the body is not the end of life. This is at the very heart of our Christian faith. And so, the Church, in its liturgy for the dead, says, "For your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven." We can be assured of this because of the resurrection of Jesus and his call to share the eternal dwelling place. Remember he said, "In my father's house there are many mansions, many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?" So, this is at the very heart of our faith. It gives a whole new aspect to human life because it gives us the hope of eternal life in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

So today is a day of triumph for Jesus and a day of assurance and of great joy for each and every one of us. We rejoice in the risen Lord and his promise of eternal life. Amen.