

“Easter Sunday”

Homily of April 16, 2006

by Fr. Aidan McAleenan

In 1917 during the Russian Revolution, there was a man named Nicolai Ivanovich Bukharin. In the 1930's he was a great person for this Marxist-Communist-Leninist sort of ideal of atheism. So he went down from Kiev to Moscow to greet these thousands of men in this great big hall to talk about the fact that God was dead and that religion was just an evil in itself. After an hour of ranting and raving and going on on how much the Communist State was the way to go, he asked, “Are there any questions?” This one man stood up and came up to the podium and looked out across and, remembering the words of the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches, he shouted, “Christ is risen!” At that point the entire group all jumped up to their feet and shouted.... (from the congregation) “Christ is risen!”

And Christ is risen today! We have had forty days in the desert walking together with the different themes of joy on every Sunday. And you have heard some really wonderful preaching. Haven't you?

You know, we know the Resurrection is true because we are here this morning. Something about the Spring, the togetherness, the new beginning brings out many people to celebrate. We have an entire gym full of people this morning. We have visitors from all over. And there is something about this Resurrection, this new beginning, that gives us hope and gives us life. We have had our Triduum. We are in the third part of the liturgy of the Triduum. On Holy Thursday night, we all came together. We listened to that new gospel of love where Jesus tells us we must wash one another's feet. And indeed we did just that, all of us that were here in the church on Holy Thursday night. And then, on Good Friday, we walked the way of the cross. We venerated the cross, not as a moment that's back there in time but a moment where Christ is truly present as we honor this moment and this place in time because we always need to be reminded of the great gift that we have received in God and in Christ. And then, yesterday, our parishoners, many of them, came together and decorated the church. Isn't this really wonderful? The decorations are (much applause!).... This truly is a wonderful parish that has a wonderful giftedness and everyone's talents are there. Yesterday, it was just amazing to see them put this together.

We know there is a resurrection. How do we know that there is really a resurrection? This is a rhetorical question. This is for Father Aidan. You know, it's really difficult because really it is a matter of faith. The gospels don't talk about it, not one of them. There is no historical. There is no photographic data. There is no written data. Nobody knows what really happened. So, why are we all here this morning? Faith! Exactly! It's our faith on some level. No matter what level

you're at, from a young kid all the way through a senior, and everything that evokes faith in between. But we are here. Now, how do we know? Because somebody told us. The Bible tells us and people tell us. How do we know that Columbus discovered America in 1492? Because somebody tells us. It is communicated in writing to us. How do we know that somebody landed on the moon in 1968? You saw it on TV. But that mightn't be real. Some people suggest that that was just a big old studio in Hollywood. Some people say things like that. There are always the doubters about what has happened. Yet, in this particular moment in time, we believe because there is a tradition that has lasted for two thousand years. Now, yes, our Church has not been as good as it should have been, following Christ all through those centuries, those twenty centuries. We are in the twenty-first century. There have been moments when really bad things happened, but the core elements of baptism and Eucharist and this day are what are fundamental to our experience of faith. We know because it is deep in our hearts. It is communicated to us through our Church, through our parents, through our holy ancestors going back generations, through the saints. Our faith and the Resurrection bring us here to this moment and to this time.

I think, more than anything else, I believe in the Resurrection because I have experienced this in my own life. There have been many moments in my own journey of life where faith and the belief in the Resurrection have sometimes gotten a little dark and dim because sometimes bad things happen to good people. We suffer the moments of loss in our lives, and there is a tendency to doubt. And yet, I find myself having just been ordained last year. It took me forty-two years to get to that moment. But yet I was there and came to that moment with a lot of experience of working in an AIDS hospice and homeless housing in San Francisco, which I have realized had stirred me to being a priest. Coming here to Christ the King is resurrection and faith to me. When I walked through the door the first Sunday, I realized, "Wow! Here are four thousand families and here is little old me in front of them, making all these mistakes," not knowing how to even bless himself when he stood up in front of the people. He was so nervous. And yet, the people, all of you, have been so loving and caring. I used to hear priests talk about falling in love with their congregations, and I said, "How could you fall in love with four thousand families and all these faces and everybody wanting you to know their names?" And I'm horrible with names! And yet, at the same time, I can stand here this morning and say that I have fallen in love with the people of Christ the King in the most wonderful way, that it is such a gifted parish. You see all of the people.... We have Social Justice. When we had the Katrina event we gathered sixty-three thousand dollars for relief efforts.

Christ is truly present in this community and we all, yes, have to roll back stones in our lives. We have to be reminded and we have to come back to church. And, by the way, if you come to church just for this one time in the year, you are very welcome. This is the Mass that you need to come to. This is it! (I'm not saying "Don't come back again." because you are very, very welcome every Sunday. ...Maybe not all of you because we can't hold all of you every Sunday!) But there is a real experience of Christ risen in our lives today that makes a difference in every single one of our lives every day, and every Sunday is a little Easter. Did you know that? "... Yes, Father." Every Sunday is a little Easter. ("Yes, Father," loudly from the congregation.) OK. You are all welcome back every Sunday!!

