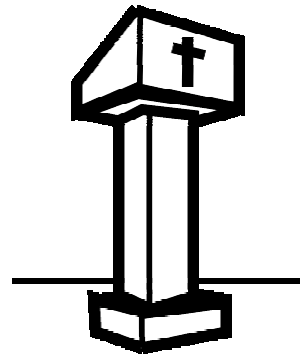


Sermon Synopsis –
Easter Sunday Sermon
Preached by Fr. Peter Champion
April 24, 2011



“Encountering Resurrection”

Those of you who were here last Easter heard me preach on a quote from Wendell Berry’s poem “The Mad Farmer’s Liberation Front.” That simple quote was two words long—“Practice resurrection.” In that sermon, I challenged us all to imagine how our lives would be different if we went out into the world and practiced resurrection, by which I meant acted as if the resurrection were a present reality and neither a nice story nor simply a long ago event.

This Easter, I am inviting you to reflect on the words spoken by the angel at the tomb to the two Marys who went to see Jesus’ tomb. The angel announces to them,

“I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified; he is not here...Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’”

Consider that the angel told the disciples to go to Galilee; that was their home turf. “Go back home if you want to see Jesus.” The message I hear from the angel in this morning’s Gospel is simple—if we want to encounter the risen Christ, if we want to encounter resurrection, we should look in the world in which we live out our daily lives.

Church is certainly a place where people are drawn when they want to encounter the divine presence. In times of need or loss, people come to church. In times of grief and anger, people come to church. This is as it should be, because church is a place where we can feel find God’s comforting and healing presence. People also come to church in times of joy, and this too is as it should be. In times of joy we are drawn to offer God thanks and praise. But we make a big mistake if we think that church is the only place to encounter God. Our Gospel today invites us to look for God’s resurrection presence anywhere and everywhere we find ourselves.

You’ve often heard me say that what we see depends on what we’re looking for. What should we look for to encounter resurrection? What might the risen Christ look like in our daily lives?

We can think about teachers, who draw the best out of students who may come to school with two strikes against them. We can think of counselors, who help people put broken lives back together and find new direction for living. I think of doctors and nurses, whose mission is to heal people. Physical healing isn’t always possible, of course, but emotional and spiritual healing are surely signs of resurrection power.

Think about those people in whose presence you find yourselves feeling most alive. Of course I’m talking about loved ones, but I’m also thinking of those people who seem to

generate life and positive energy when we interact with them. One of those people in my life is Maria, one of the owners of our favorite hole-in-the-wall taqueria in downtown Richmond. We can walk through the doors and know we'll be greeted with a smile, recognition and warmth. We love the burritos there, but I think the genuine pleasure at our presence is what keeps us coming back. In Maria's presence, I feel more fully loved and accepted—more fully alive. A taco shop might seem like a strange place to encounter the risen Christ, but there it is.

The point I'm trying to make is that the risen Christ is always present around us; it is our inability to see and feel Christ's presence that is the problem. The English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote a wonderful line—"Christ plays in ten thousand places." All we need to do is be open to the encounter.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu tells a story about his life that rings true as we think about Easter. Raised in an Anglo-Catholic parish, he was trained as an altar boy to genuflect each time he passed in front of the altar. It was, he says, because the altar is the place where Christ's presence is made real in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. But, Tutu says, his perspective has widened as he has matured. Now, Tutu says, he feels he should genuflect in front of each person he encounters because he is learning to see Christ's presence in every person.

This Easter, I am so glad we are gathered together to celebrate the risen Christ's presence. But this Easter, I challenge you to not simply look for the resurrected Jesus here in church. Christ plays in ten thousand places... May we have the spirit to be a sign of the resurrected Christ for others—may we practice resurrection. But may we also have eyes to see Christ playing everywhere we go, and may we have hearts to rejoice.

In the risen Christ,

Fr. Peter+

