

Year B, Easter Day

April 1, 2018

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, AMEN

Priests get asked the most interesting questions. I usually know a tough question is coming when a parent drags an unwilling child up to me at coffee hour and says, "...ask Fr. Jeff..." Sometimes I wish it was simply, "wanna buy some Girl Scout cookies?" because then I can point to my wife and say, "she won't let me..." I've been asked, "does God wear clothes?" The standard, "will my pet be in heaven?" The practical – what do I do if I drop my wafer... One of my favorites is, "how do you break the big wafer in two so perfectly?" *Wafer Breaking 101 at seminary.*

As a priest one of the most difficult questions, though, is "How does this whole resurrection thing work?" If you ask me about the Trinity I can blather on about it, giving you a most unsatisfactory answer, leaving you more confused than when you first came to me (and leaving me exhausted). I can drone on about whether the bread and the wine are true flesh or just a symbol or a memorial (not that anyone truly understands it). But the resurrection question often comes from someone who just lost a loved one – so the question is coming from a place of deep pain and grief. But honestly, you either believe it, or you don't, because the idea of the resurrection is just beyond the horizon of our comprehension.

People love to assemble timelines and schemes based on various bits of scripture – to neatly package up their understanding of the resurrection; to give themselves the illusion that they understand, and are therefore, in control. And if you will just send in \$10 they will reveal their knowledge to you in a booklet entitled "God's Avenging

Sword” or “God’s Coming Wrath and Judgment.” And that’s just not helpful, in fact, I think its deceitful.

The resurrection is not a nuanced thing – you either believe it or you don’t. When we come to understand that God loves us, without condition, and when we come to understand that God forgives our sins – then the rest falls into place. It is not in the details that we are saved, but in the trusting – trusting in the promises Jesus made, trusting in the hope of the resurrection. There is no essay test...there is no pop quiz...no minor in theology is required.

When we profess our faith each Sunday, we profess that we “look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come” we are not claiming certain knowledge. We are proclaiming our faith and our hope – faith as something that cannot be seen, may not be understood, but is certainly believed. Faith and hope that on this day so long ago, Jesus stomped all over death. Faith, and hope and trust that our future is spent in God’s presence. Our Episcopal service of burial ends with the Easter words, “Alleluia. Christ is risen.” And the people respond, “The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.” We say it because we believe.

When we become preoccupied with the details of salvation we lose sight of the mystery of God’s free gift to us – the gift of grace, fullness of life now, and the promise of eternal life in paradise. In a few moments we will gather together into yet another mystery of our faith... Holy Communion... Come to the banquet with your fellow Christians. Rejoice and be glad. Sing hymns of thanksgiving for the gift of healing, life and love with which God graces us.

Rejoice and be glad, for on this day love defeated death.

AMEN

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam