



“Resurrection of One, Resurrection for All”

A homily by the Very Reverend Michael R. Ruk

Sun., Apr. 21, 2019

Gospel this week: Luke 24:1-10

“The resurrection of One is the resurrection for all.” So said Gregory of Nyssa. He was a 4th-century bishop in Turkey. “The resurrection of One is the resurrection for all.”

So many times, I think that Christians think that Christmas is the chief Christian feast. It’s really not. It didn’t show up till about the 4th century. The chief Christian feast is Easter. The resurrection.

Today we come to the end of a three-part play. Three acts. It’s started on Maundy Thursday with Jesus giving himself as the servant. Both washing his disciples’ feet and in the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. Then we came to his suffering, and his passion and his death on Good Friday.

And finally, we come to today, his resurrection. So the story that we’re partaking of today is just a part. And hopefully you’ve journeyed along with us these past few days. Because you really can’t get to today unless you’ve walked the cross.

Many people have told me over months and months that we’re living in a very dark time. A dark time when the Church is full of hypocrisy and corruption. When government is morally bankrupt. When the environment is forgotten. When people who are rich and powerful abuse their status and abuse those who are poor and powerless. The list of despair goes on and on.

So in many ways we, too, partake of that cross of Christ, that suffering. But we all have to realize that when we embrace that suffering, we also embrace that resurrection, that hope. Because no matter how bad life gets – and life sometimes gets very dark; the world is dark, our relationships go dark, our individual lives get dark – we have to embrace that light. That resurrection light.

If you were with us last night, we kindled a bonfire outside. And we prayed around it. Because we realize that light overcomes that darkness in our world. And that life overcomes death.

That's the core meaning of our Christian faith. Too many times, Christianity gets hijacked by people and turned into something about, "You're less than this," or, "believe this but don't believe that," or, "you're bad" or, "you're good." But really, Christianity is about giving life.

When you give life, you partake of that resurrection that Jesus gave to so many. And I think that is at the core of what it means to be a follower of Jesus today. It's that we are a people of resurrection. We're people who give light to a world that is full of death and darkness.

So many of us have seen that iconic image this week of the burning of Notre Dame cathedral. That horrible image of fire. But if you saw the picture inside, amidst all the rubble, you saw that cross in the back.

But something that has been forgotten a little bit, when that picture was taken: If you've ever been inside Notre Dame, what's at the base of that cross? It's Mary holding her dead Son in her arms. An image of the pietà.

So you can't get to the cross, that resurrection, unless you also hold in your hands the sufferings of the world. Just like Mary held the sufferings of her Son. And I think that's a lot of times not mentioned in that picture. It's that we, too, as followers of Jesus, hold the suffering of the world in our hearts.

But we have to allow the resurrection to transform it. To bring that pain to healing. To bring that darkness to light. To bring that death to life.

That call from Gregory of Nyssa requires that each of us be partakers and promoters of resurrection. And I think if Christianity talked more about resurrection, we would be a much different faith. A much different faith.

I wish we would spend much more time focusing on the resurrection than anything else. Not condemning people. Not being some moral police officer. But talking about how we give light to the world. That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

So I ask you on this day of resurrection, How do you practice resurrection in your life? How do you practice resurrection? How do you practice giving light to the world?

Maybe that means helping someone who is on their last legs of life. To be with them in their suffering: the elderly, the sick, the homebound. Maybe it's being with someone who has no one: the lonely, the forgotten. That's giving life.

Maybe you stand up for someone who's oppressed: the immigrant, the refugee, the broken, the person abused because of race, gender, sexuality. That's giving life.

Maybe you're with someone who has material no means: they're hungry, they need clothing, they need medical care. You're giving life to them. You're practicing resurrection.

That truly is what it means to be a follower of the risen One. It's not about judging people or condemning people for this or that. It's about giving life.

And I would even go so far as to say, If you do not give life to another human being or the world, you are not a follower of Christ. You are not a follower of Christ.

Do you defend the environment? Do you defend those who are weak? Do you defend the foreign? Do you defend those who are sick, who are weak in mind, body or spirit? Do you defend the "other"? The other religion, the outsider? That's practicing resurrection.

That truly is what it means to be a part of our life in Christ. So Christ's resurrection, that walk that started so many years ago, was one that embraced the suffering of the world. Of a broken world. And it also requires us to followers of Christ, to be givers of his resurrection to all. To be bearers of that life.

So for these next 50 days – because Easter is not just one day in our tradition – let's be bearers of life. And let us practice the resurrection – not for one, but resurrection for all.

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