

Homily for Easter April 20, 2003

By Father Charles Bowes

Acts 10:34a-43
1 Corinthians 5:6b-8
Mark 16:1-7 (Vigil)
John 20:1-9 (Sunday)

To discover the Lord, darkness is necessary.

The gospels the Church uses at Easter to tell the story of the Resurrection begin in the early morning darkness. This is always how our discovery of the risen Christ begins – in darkness.

While it is still dark, among others, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb of the Jesus who healed her, who taught her, who accorded her respect and love she never thought herself worthy of. With his death, her hope died.

Earlier this week a woman was called into her supervisor's office and was told that, because of the brutal economy, she was being let go. She cleaned out her desk and packed away her hope. She walked into the darkness of wondering what she would tell her children.

Earlier this week, someone received terrible news from a physician.

Earlier this week, someone else heard the words, "I have never loved you."

Earlier this week, someone's hope was crucified. And that person's darkness is overwhelming.

No one is ready to encounter Easter until he or she has spent time in the early morning darkness where hope cannot be seen. In such darkness, Easter is the last thing we are expecting. And that is why Easter terrifies us. We dread the darkness, but we fear even more what is beyond it. Sometimes the darkness we

know is preferable to what we don't know. We have learned at least to function and exist in the darkness; we find distorted solace in the fact that the darkness means nothing more can disappoint or hurt us.

In our darkness, we are not ready for Easter's first light. It illuminates those dark places we have become used to. It focuses our vision and attention on what we have never seen before. It dares us to imagine possibilities beyond our limited understanding of what is possible.

Easter is not about bunnies, springtime and girls in pretty dresses. Easter is about more hope than we can handle.

Easter calls us out of the darkness that shrouds our lives into the light of possibility, of healing, of re-creation. The risen Christ proclaims the love, compassion, generosity, humility and selflessness that ultimately triumph over hatred, bigotry, prejudice, despair, greed and death. The empty tomb is the sign of perfect hope – that in Christ all things are possible and that God's hand is at work in everything, even in the darkness. May we live not in fear of Easter morning's first light, but embrace that light and the hope it promises in the risen One who is forever in our midst, dispelling the darkness.

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