

Reflection for Easter Sunday, Cycle A

The readings for Easter Sunday may be found at <http://cms.usccb.org/bible/readings/041220.cfm>.

Please note that we use the optional Gospel reading from the Easter Vigil. It can be found <http://cms.usccb.org/bible/readings/041120.cfm>, but you have to scroll through all of the other readings to get to it at the bottom of the page.

1st Reading: *Acts 10:34a, 37–43*

This is Peter's speech, or preaching, to the household of Cornelius. Remember that Cornelius had a dream to send for Peter and Peter had a dream to accept Cornelius' invitation. Peter went to Cornelius' house and this is his teaching. It is a good example of the early kerygma, that is proclamation, of the Church.

2nd Reading: *Colossians 3:1-4*

The title for this small selection, in the Gospels, is "Mystical Death and Resurrection". The relationship to our spiritual life and physical life is sometimes difficult to perceive. None the less, the message here is to allow the spiritual to lead the physical.

Gospel: *Matthew 28:1-10*

Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Mt 28:10

The instruction to the women to tell Jesus' disciples to go to Galilee where they will see Jesus is given twice in this Gospel, once by the angel (Mt 28:7) and once by Jesus himself (Mt 28:10). What is so important about those words? The same instruction appears in Mark's Gospel (Mk 16:7) given by the angel. Luke's Gospel reports that the angels said, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead?" (Lk 24:5) In John's Gospel, which is commonly considered more spiritual than the others, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples that he is going to the Father, God, in heaven (Jn 20:17b).

I'm convinced that the instruction to go to Galilee is important to Matthew. The Apostles were born in Galilee. Galilee is where they were raised, where they lived and worked and played. Luke's question, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead?" is completely in line with this. The risen Lord is to be experienced in our day-to-day lives, where we live and work and play.

John's Gospel puts the risen Lord within the realm of the spirit. But, if we do not separate our life in the spirit from our life in the world, there is no conflict. And we shouldn't separate it. We should allow our life in the spirit to guide our life in the world. That is how we achieve the fullness of life, with the risen Lord guiding us by His Spirit.

Allowing the Spirit of the risen Lord to guide us on our day-to-day lives is not the easiest thing to do. The demands of living in the world pull at us. We are, oftentimes, consumed both physically and emotionally by the struggles of our engagement with life. We are distracted from thoughts of the spiritual and may not have any energy left for it anyway.

It may seem counter intuitive, but seeking the risen Lord within the struggles of our day-to-day lives is how we can energize ourselves within the struggle. The presence of the risen Lord is life-giving while living the day-to-day without His presence can be life-draining.

Many of us have friends or relatives who are life-giving to us and we turn to them when we are particularly down. The Lord is there, in that relationship but He is also there in the midst of our struggles if we learn to open ourselves to His presence. How do we do that?!

The path to continual relationship with the Lord is probably different for each of us. One thing that is probably common to all of us, though, is the need to let go of the things that keep us from experiencing the Lord. We need to let go of fear and we need to let go of anger. We need to let go of our desire to be in control of everything in our lives, our desire to be God. We need to let go of clinging to substitutes for God, power, wealth, pleasure and honor (as noted by Thomas Aquinas). We need to trust and pray the prayer Jesus prayed in the garden, Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (Lk 22:42)

Another suggestion I can offer goes beyond the general letting go of things that keep us from experiencing the presence of the Lord. It is called practicing presence. Whatever situation we are in, whether it is with an individual or a group we can practice presence. It requires letting go too.

Practicing presence requires letting go of our efforts to control the present situation. It requires letting go of whatever anxieties we brought into the moment. It requires hearing the other, letting go of our pre-conceived judgments and refraining from developing a response while the other is trying to communicate to us. It requires us to "feel" the other, not just hearing the words but non-judgmentally feeling their emotion and psychological state.

A spiritual writer that I really appreciate, even though I've forgotten who it is, said that when we practice this kind of presence, we feel a mysterious third presence. Try it. It's true, and to experience it, brings excitement and life to whatever situation. That mysterious presence is the presence of the risen Lord, made present through the Holy Spirit.

He has gone to the Galilee of our day-to-day lives and there we can see him, if we believe. I'm reminded of Jesus's comment in the story of the raising of Lazarus, "Did I not tell you, if you believe you will see the glory of God."

Reflection:

“He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.’” Mt 28:6-7

Question: What words or phrases caught your attention as the Gospel was being proclaimed on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they caught your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative: Share about/reflect what is your Galilee. Where do you live and work and play, specifically? Reflect upon/share about your experience of the Lord in your Galilee. What change can you make in your life so that you might experience the presence of the risen Lord more often?

Verse by Verse

Mt 28:1 “...as the first day of the week was dawning.” | This temporal marker is unclear. For Jewish people, the Sabbath ended at sundown. For Romans, the day started in the morning. Did the women go to the tomb in the evening or the next morning? This knowledge might help people understand how we can celebrate the Resurrection at the evening Easter Vigil and in the morning of Easter day. Dawning may mean the dawning of the day of the Lord’s Day in the evening rather than the dawning of first light.

Mt 28:2 “...rolled back the stone...” | The angel did not roll back the stone so Jesus could get out but so the people could see that he was not there.

Mt 28:6 “He is not here...” | This has the same meaning as Luke 24:5 “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

Mt 28:7 “...is going before you to Galilee.” | Galilee was the place where the apostles were born, raised, lived, worked and played. Is the angel saying you will see him in your day-to-day life? I think so. Jesus repeats this message in Mt 28:10. It must be important.