

## Homily ~ Easter Vigil, 2019, by Fr. Phil Horrigan

**At the beginning** of Jesus' earthly ministry 2 young men, disciples of John the Baptist, started to follow Jesus. He turned and said to them, "What are you looking for?" And they said, "Where do you live?"

**And later he asked them**, "What did you go out in the desert to see?" A reed? A man dressed in fine clothes? Yes, but more than that". They must have wondered what more was there.

**And just yesterday** in the proclamation of the passion gospel, in the scene in the garden Jesus asked the Roman officials, "Who are you looking for"? And they fell to the ground when he looked at them; and they must have wondered – there's something more going on here.

**And today in another part of the Easter gospel, in John's account**, the two men in white at the tomb ask the women, "Who are you looking for?"

**And they don't know for sure anymore.** Because all that they had hoped for is apparently over because "of him they found nothing except some linen cloths". But in the emptiness of the tomb there was more than they expected. And that's the astonishing mystery of Easter.

**What do you suppose** the women expected to find when they went to the tomb in at daybreak on that first day of the week? A closed tomb? An open tomb with a body still in it? They brought spices to anoint the body, they expected to find a body, his body. Wouldn't you?

The statement of the two men, who apparently spoke together, is magnificent: "Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, he has been raised"!

**He is given a new title: The Living One, and so he** cannot be found among the dead. The dead are, of course, completely dead. One cannot be just kind of dead, or a little dead. The Living One is an absolute condition, – Jesus is fully and completely alive.

**Resurrection is never about the usual expectations.**

**And although Peter and John** and the others thought that the women's story seemed like nonsense they went to the tomb and saw the same empty cloths and empty tomb. They must have looked at one another and said, "Now what do we do?"

**If there had been a dead body**, well that was to be expected, and they might have simply gone on with life. Later the disciples would see someone in the upper room and think it was a ghost; well no one really believes in ghosts, but then they were surprised all over again.

**Resurrection changes the** boundaries of life and death. The one who wasn't there is the one who is at the heart of why we're here this evening. From the emptiness of the tomb springs forth the fullness of life.

**So maybe the question is:** - What are we looking for today? An Easter party? – With great singing and flowers and Easter bonnets? By the way whatever happened to great Easter hats?

**Surely we can ask more of ourselves;** surely we have greater expectations than that. I think we want more, expect more and desire to embrace more than the surface, the obvious, and the easy.

**The message of Easter,** the message of resurrection is the gift of freedom; **free from** a death that would mark the end; **free from** believing that our past choices and decisions are all there is; **free from** the bonds of remorse, of cynicism, of the lack of confidence and self-love.

**But, the mystery of Easter** is also the gift of being **free to...** make choices we've never made before, to pray, to love deeply, to forgive without condition, to hope with conviction, to enjoy abundantly. And in our day to be free to challenge the political ideology of exclusion and separation.

**In the reading for tomorrow morning** we hear Paul tells us that we are like a fresh batch of dough, everything is new and everything is fresh, it truly is the springtime of our life.

**We know our world** has more than enough violence and prejudice and indifference; but as we renew our baptismal promises in a few moments we will also renew our commitment to discard whatever we contribute to that world and to instead set our hearts on the new bread of sincerity and truth.

**He is not there** among the dead and neither are we; he is to be found among the living and the loving. Resurrection means that we take the word of the two heavenly messengers seriously: the living one is among the living. He is loose in the world.

{ Story of the Hindu boy: An Indian bishop spoke to his brother bishops at the Synod on Evangelization that the pope had called in Rome in 2012. The bishop told of a young Hindu boy who kept asking the teachers at a Christian school, especially one of the priests there about their faith, about being Christian. They answered all his questions, yet he still asked more. One day the priest gave him a copy of the gospels and told him to read them. The boy returned several days later and confronted the priest with: "It says Jesus Christ is risen from the dead". "Yes" the priest said. "He is really risen?" the boy asked again. Yes, the priest said. "Then why didn't you tell me"! }

**Resurrection is not an event** that is over and done with. It is God's deed and it's still unfolding. It happens in the awesome glory of this holy night. It happens because the pillar of light has subdued the darkness just as the Christ has broken the bonds of death.

**It happens when** we challenge injustice, when we care for our earth, when we persist in hope, when we live in love and when we say aloud: there will be a new dawn and a new dream.

**And on this Easter day**, my friends, I wish for you that wherever the future takes you; whatever lies in your heart; however you take up life; and whomever you love, that the joy and the glory of Easter embrace you completely.

*Phil Horrigan*