

EASTER SUNDAY 2017

LITTLE GIRL.....Father concerned that she understand about Easter.... Asks... Do you know what Easter means? She answered with confidence... “SURPRISE!”

Lent for me.... And for many in this parish this year ... was like no other - as Jesus walked the way of suffering and death ...so did we.

For me these past months were much like a retreat... I was well aware of God's presence with me...I've taken much time to reflect read, and pray...

As I thought about today's service.... Wondering....What's the message of Easter for me / for us this year?..... Is there a surprise for us in our readings.... In our worship today?

Our scriptures today Peter preaches to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius...He started out by saying..."I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him!"

Well.... Surprise for Peter! Just a few days before that he thought only the Jews were chosen by God. In the preceding chapters we hear that he had a dream that changed his understanding and his preaching!in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

That is good news!

The songHallelujah! Two years ago we heard that song with different words(Jessica)..... the story of Jesus death and resurrection.

When I mentioned to Fr Mellanie that I had asked you, Sebastian and Paul, I said I'd asked you to do those same words. She said, she'd be sorry to not be there to hear it if you said yes, but she suggested they sing the original Leonard Cohen words. ?? Fr Mellanie helps us often to look at things in a new way but I was surprised at her suggestion. I couldn't get past David and Bathsheba ...She explained that the original song has the strong message that we do mess up.... BUT even when we mess up or bad things happen to us, there is always a way to return to God. Even in our weaknesses and mistakes there's hope of new life – Jesus' resurrection has opened the door for us to come fully into God's presence..... "*and even though it all went wrong I'll stand before the Lord of song with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah!*" Good news!.....

Today's Psalm is a Psalm of joy and gladness! In the midst of that rejoicing and thanksgiving did you notice.....those lines?

The Lord has punished me sorely but He did not hand me over to death. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord. We know that at some point everyone here will die ... at least our bodies will die.... But that's not the end! There is more!

I was with my mother when she died –I've shared this with many of you. She hadn't spoken since Saturday afternoon, but could respond by squeezing her hand. All of a sudden, around 4pm on Sunday afternoon, she began to speak...we were surprised! We couldn't make it out.... She reached her hands up.... Then her face was transformed... she looked years younger.... She smiled faintly, and was gone... that was not the end for her.... She was met ? by Jesus ?by someone she

knew? ...she was met by love. What a wonderful surprise for her, and for us to witness!

During Lent the clergy from the South Shore met here.... We always take time to discuss the Gospel for the coming Sunday. That week the Gospel was the raising of Lazarus..... there were some comments about the shortest verse in the Bible..... which is?.....Jesus wept! One of the clergy commented he felt that Jesus wept because He was sad for Mary and Martha who had lost their brother, but also Perhaps even more because He was bringing Lazarus back. He speculated that Jesus knew he was bringing Lazarus back to life from a place of Joy and Beauty and Love...a place where Lazarus was delighted to be!

There is a parable about twin boys in the womb having a conversation about the prospects of being born... one was excited about moving out into a world where there would be light and where people can live even though they are not surrounded by water and that they can move around and that there will be a mother. The second one thinks that's just nonsense... there's no such thing as a mother..... there's is no life outside the womb.... The parable ends with them being born!Into life as we know it!

The Hymn that Pastor Steve sang at the services for both Shirlette and Foard 'I Was There To Hear Your Boring Cry' it's written as God speaking to us about being there in every part of our lives.... It has the beautiful line.... "And when you close your weary eyes..... I'll be there as I have always been..... with just one more surprise!"

The Colossians reading calls us to seek the things that are above..... the things that are of Christ...the things that last.... In this life and the next... there is more! Hallelujah!

Now, let's think of the Easter Gospel.... Certainly a surprise when Mary arrived at the tomb and the stone was rolled away! So she went and told Peter and who else? Those words jumped out at me, the other day when I was wondering about today's service. Peter, and

- THE OTHER DISCIPLE, THE ONE WHOM JESUS LOVED. Scholars tell us, the writer of the Gospel, John, was referring to himselfprobably so....but suppose we allow ourselves to think of that in a different way.

Br John Woodrum, wrote this about walking with Jesus through Holy Week... *Will you stay a little longer, reclining on His bosom; accepting the invitation to have your feet washed; following him to the cross and waiting in the wee hours of the morning for the sun to rise? If you have the courage to stay with Jesus, you may find as the Easter sun shines through these stained glass windows that the identity of the beloved disciple all this time has been you.*

Maybe John left that open... 'the one Jesus loved'.... Because really John is not the only one Jesus loved. When I read that the other day, I realized Surprise..... I am the disciple Jesus loves! But, Surprise, not just me.... YOU TOO!!!

Jesus calls us.... The disciples He loves! To learn.... To grow.... To love..... to serve... to live our lives with Him and the other beloved disciples.... to become all

that we have been made to be...(not to stay as the tulip bulb, but to grow into full bloom!).. to live with joyand to share the Good News . That is the message of Easter. Jesus has opened the door to us..... to come into the fullest possible relationship with Him....that we may be fully alive and share in the joy of His resurrection.

We are His beloved disciples!! Invited to learn from Him, to study, and to grow ever closer and more like Him; to quietly and humbly serve; to praise with joy and enthusiasm; to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and to be the presence of Christ with whomever and where ever we are!

I love this fable – I tell it often!....

Once upon a time a man found the egg of an eaglet. It had been abandoned by its mother, but as it was still warm, he took it home and put it in the nest of one of his backyard chickens along with the other eggs that were waiting to hatch.

After a period of time the eaglet hatched, along with the chicks. He set about the backyard doing the things the chicks did. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He looked for corn that the man would throw into the yard. He clucked and cackled as best he could, and as he grew, he would try like the others to thrash his wings and fly a few feet in the air.

Years passed, and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided magnificently among the powerful wind currents, soaring and swooping, scarcely beating its long golden wings.

The eagle asked, “What is that?”

“That is the eagle, the king of the birds,” said one of his neighbours. “he belongs to the sky and the high places. We are chickens. We belong to the earth.”

The old eagle believed this to be true, and so he lived and died as a chicken! He didn't know there was more!

Friends, because of Easter – there is more!

We are more! We are Jesus' beloved disciples!

Thanks be to God!