

The Sunday Missive – April 14, 2024

The Third Sunday in Eastertide

Hymn 199 Come, ye faithful, raise the strain

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness!
God hath brought his Israel into joy from sadness:
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke, Jacob's sons and daughters,
Led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls today: Christ hath burst his prison,
And from three days' sleep in death as a sun hath risen;
All the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying
From his light, to whom we give laud and praise undying.

Now the queen of seasons, bright with the day of splendor,
With the royal feast of feasts, comes its joy to render;
Comes to glad Jerusalem, who with true affection
Welcomes in unwearied strains Jesus' resurrection.

Neither might the gates of death, nor the tomb's dark portal,
Nor the watchers, nor the seal hold thee as a mortal:
But today amidst thine own thou didst stand, bestowing
That thy peace which evermore passeth human knowing.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbQ_5pzRlIM

The Collect of the Day

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Acts 3:12-19

Peter addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety

we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

“And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.”

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause* ***You set me free when I am hard-pressed; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.***

You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory* ***How long will you worship dumb idols and run after false gods?"***

Know that the Lord does wonders for the faithful* ***When I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.***

Tremble, then, and do not sin* ***Speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.***

Offer the appointed sacrifices* ***And put your trust in the Lord.***

Many are saying, Oh, that we might see better times!* ***Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O Lord.***

You have put gladness in my heart* ***More than when grain and wine and oil increase.***

I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep* ***For only you, Lord, make me dwell in safety.***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqvVbmDmyao>

1 John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymn 121 Baptized in water

Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit,
Cleansed by the blood of Christ our King:
Heirs of salvation, trusting his promise,
Faithfully now God's praise we sing.

Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit,
Dead in the tomb with Christ our King:
One with his rising, freed and forgiven,
Thankfully now God's praise we sing.

Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit,
Marked with the sign of Christ our King:
Born of one Father, we are his children,
Joyfully now God's praise we sing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQzv820ywMg>

Luke 24: 13-48

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road,

and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

The Rest of the Story – Easter 3B

Used to love the late, great Paul Harvey’s radio show “The Rest of the Story.” Harvey always had a surprise in store for us about the story he was reporting.

Today’s Gospel has its own surprise ending -- to the Emmaus story. Two bereft disciples, walking in sorrow, had been joined by a stranger who explained how the passion of Christ is foretold in the Hebrew Bible. When they arrived at Emmaus to share a meal, Jesus’ true identity was suddenly revealed in the breaking of the bread. So far so magnificent. And then he vanished! It’s almost as if he was playing “Now you see me, now you don’t” with them.

This beautiful narrative not only solidifies the spiritual power of the Eucharist with bread and wine symbolizing – and when we take them,

embodying – the living love of Jesus. But the story also gives us some clues about our own duty as people of faith. As he said to them in last week's story, "Do you see and believe? Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe." Each of life's moments arrives suddenly, and Jesus is forever vanishing – leaving the response in our hands. If we treat the Holy Spirit as the vital ingredient of a life well-lived, when life's moments arrive, we will always be drawing from the unseen well; always channeling the love of God into our interactions with one another.

The information we need is there in the story, but the power we need to act on that information is here -- in us. We must always be eager to be influenced, led, supported and justified by God's love. How we behave when Jesus is in the room with us is instructive; how we behave when Jesus has vanished is inspiration, is incarnation.

While they were talking about this, Jesus joins them at the table and the first thing he says to them is, "Peace be with you." They must have been terrified, seeing a ghost. Then he dares them to touch his wounds and see; "...a ghost does not have flesh and bones like I do." And, "Have you anything here to eat?" They give him a piece of broiled fish, which he eats. Jesus explains why the Son of Man had to suffer and die: So he could be raised. Then he says, "You see, everything written about me in the scriptures must be fulfilled."

Surely Jesus thinks of Job, who had been a loving and moral man, but had lost absolutely everything. This had led to a direct encounter with God. Surely he thinks of Isaiah's suffering servant: "It was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed."

This is the heart and soul of the Hebrew scriptures. Our Christian belief holds that its fulfillment has come in Jesus. And so, the apostles were converted by "everything written about him in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms." Says Luke.

Perhaps you remember the great French film actress Stéphane Audran, known for her performances in films by Claude Chabrol, Eric Roemer and others. Perhaps her best-loved performance came when she was in her fifties, as the title character in the film *Babette's Feast*.

A pair of extremely pious but repressed spinster sisters living along the coast of 19th-century Denmark take in a Prussian War refugee named Babette, who is a magnificent chef. Here come those pesky Prussians again. One day, Babette wins a lottery prize of 10,000 francs. Instead of returning to Paris and her lost lifestyle, she spends the money assembling the ingredients and preparing a magnificent, lavish, multi-course dinner for the spinster sisters and their small, strait-laced congregation out on a remote peninsula, on the occasion of their founding pastor's hundredth birthday. More than just a feast, the meal is an outpouring of Babette's appreciation, an act of self-sacrifice; Babette tells no one that she is spending her entire winnings on the meal.

The townspeople, accustomed to plain clothing and plain food, are scandalized by the many colorful ingredients in Babette's feast. They resolve not to enjoy the "satanic Sabbath" she sets before them. But as they taste first one delight, then another, little by little, the room is filled with conversation and laughter as the people are transformed by the meal.

The assembled people – now disciples of hers -- assume that Babette will now return to Paris. When she tells them that all of her money is gone and that she is not going anywhere, the sisters are aghast. "Now you will be poor the rest of your life", says one, to which Babette replies, "An artist is never poor." "But this is not the end, Babette," they reply, "in Paradise you will be the great artist God meant you to be. And Oh, how you will enchant the angels!", which is how the original Isak Dinesen short story and the film both end.

'Babette's Feast' is the favorite film of Rome's Pope Francis. Three years before he was elected, he said so in print in an interview with *Avvenire*, in response to those who criticize his ecumenical mission, and comparing the lack of charity in those opposed to his outreach efforts to the rigidity of the townspeople in *Babette's Feast*. "It is a joy and a great consolation," he said, "to bring delight to others. This joy, the fruit of fraternal love, is not that of the vain and self-centered, but of lovers who delight in the good of those whom they love, who give freely to them and thus bear good fruit."

One of Babette's dinner guests speaks of mercy as he reflects on the effect of the meal on his small community of believers: "Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another. Man, in his weakness and shortsightedness believes he must make choices in this life. He trembles at the risks he takes. We do know fear. But there comes a time when our eyes are opened and we come to realize that mercy is infinite. We need only await it with confidence and receive it with gratitude. Mercy imposes no conditions. And lo! Everything we have chosen has been granted to us. And everything we rejected has also been granted. Yes, we even get back what we rejected. For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another."

There's much to be drawn from such a complex film, and many diverse interpretations of its intent. But for us Christians, the parallel to the Eucharist, a heavenly Feast, is striking. In her sacrifice, her pouring out of her resources in an expansive love, Babette is a riveting Christ-figure. The stupendous meal is an earthly parallel to the heavenly banquet. And the grace it imparts, the rich outpouring of emotion among the gloomy Jutlander congregants, mirrors the spiritual life-giving nourishment of the Eucharist.

In English, the word "repent" is often misunderstood. It seems to imply that we have already done something wrong and we regret it. Repentance means to live beyond a sinful past. But in the gospels, the word used for repentance is *metanoia*. Literally this means to do an about face, to turn around and face in an entirely new direction.

Robert Barron offers a simple, yet profound view: Within each of us there are two souls, a little soul (*pusilla-anima*) and a great soul (*magna-anima*). On any given day we tend to identify more with one or the other of these and we are a very different person depending upon which soul is reigning within us.

Literally, *metanoia* means to move beyond our present mindset beyond our present way of seeing things, and into magnanimity. Thus, if we take our identity from the little soul, we will inevitably feel bitter and angry or paranoid and defensive. When we respond to life's moments this way, we tend to be short-sighted, impatient, despairing, and constantly looking for compensation; pusillanimous.

But we also have within us a great soul. When it reigns, we become different people altogether. We are relating out of our greater souls when we are overwhelmed by compassion, when everyone is sister or brother to us, when we want to give of ourselves without concern of cost, when we are able to carry the tensions of life without a breakdown in our chastity, and when our arms and our hearts would want nothing other than to embrace the whole world and everyone in it. We are magnanimous.

When Jesus asks us to repent, to do *metanoia*, what he is asking is that we cease identifying ourselves with the little soul and instead begin to live out of our other one. The word *metanoia* is rooted in two Greek words: *meta*—beyond; and *nous*—mind. *Metanoia* means to move beyond our present mindset, beyond our present way of seeing things.

See how the miracles of Jesus are connected to opening up and healing someone's eyes, ears, or tongue. Eyes are opened in order to see more clearly; ears are opened in order to hear things more wholly and voices are loosened to speak words of reconciliation and love to one other. What Jesus is doing in these miracles is attaching the eyes, ears, and tongue to the greater soul so that what a person is now seeing, hearing, and speaking is not bitterness, hurt, and pettiness but rather compassion, gratitude, and praise.

Hymn 492 Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness

Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness, wake your noblest, sweetest strain,
With the praises of your Savior let his house resound again;
Him let all your music honor, and your songs exalt his reign.

Sing how he come forth from heaven, bowed himself to Bethlehem's cave,
Stooped to wear the servant's vesture, bore the pain, the cross, the grave,
Passed within the gates of darkness, thence his banished ones to save.

So, he tasted death for mortals, he, of humankind the head,
Sinless one, among the sinful, Prince of life, among the dead;
Thus he wrought the full redemption, and the captor captive led.

Now on high, yet ever with us, from his Father's throne the Son
Rules and guides the world he ransomed, till the appointed work be done,
Till he see, renewed and perfect, all things gathered into one.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKQbM_6nQuM

The Peddler of Flowers

I came from the country
With flowers,
Larkspur and roses,
Fretted lilies
In their leaves,
And long, cool lavender.

I carried them
From house to house,
And cried them
Down hot streets.
The sun fell
Upon my flowers,
And the dust of the streets
Blew over my basket.

That night
I slept upon the open seats
Of a circus,
Where all day long
People had watched
The antics
Of a painted clown.

Amy Lowell

Please note: Padre Sid is on sabbatical beginning tomorrow. The next Sunday Missive will appear on The Day of Pentecost, May 19. Meanwhile, may God's blessings rain upon you and yours.